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WINNER OF SEVENTEENTH SUMMER
LITERARY COMPETITION

Monica

THE STORY OF
A YOUNG MAGAZINE APPRENTICE

by ALBERTA EISEMAN
and INGRID SLADKUS

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY / NEW YORK / 1957

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The brief quotation on page 20 is from Gian Carlo Menotti's opera, *The Medium*, published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

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To
Mark, Niky and Margot

A DODD, MEAD CAREER BOOK

WINNER OF THE SEVENTEENTH SUMMER LITERARY COMPETITION

MONICA

The Story of a Young Magazine Apprentice

by ALBERTA EISEMAN and INGRID SLADKUS

TO MONICA COLE, her summer apprenticeship on a large women's magazine held so much promise that she soon faced her first really grown-up decision. Should she turn down a scholarship to college and stay at her job? Monica determines to do just that . . . and to succeed at night school as well.

Her two new worlds bring hard work and many obstacles, along with romance and good times. So intriguing, for instance, are her show business assignments, her close contact with entertainment people and her association with the sophisticated young fiction editor, that it takes near failure at her studies to make Monica find herself. Eventually, her friendship with Larry Simon, an engineering major, helps complete her course to adulthood.

CHAPTER ONE

MONICA SAT holding her breath, staring at the Editor-in-Chief of *Living Today*, unable to believe that she was actually hearing her say,

"All right, Monica, the job is yours. I hope you'll have a happy summer with us."

Mrs. Duncan pushed back her chair and got up, taking a sheaf of papers with her.

"I'll show you to your new desk, so you can find your way when you come in Monday morning," she said, walking toward the door.

Monica hurried behind her, down the long hallway, wondering what kind of people worked behind each of the identical closed doors of a women's magazine.

Finally, on entering one of the rooms, Elizabeth Duncan explained,

"You'll sit in the Reader Mail office, Monica. It seems to contain the only empty desk we have at the moment. You won't be working exclusively for this department, though. You'll be sort of a girl friday for the whole editorial staff."

Monica noticed three desks, all piled equally high with letters, and a wall of shelves stacked with back issues of the magazine.

"We've been very shorthanded, what with everyone going away on vacation," Mrs. Duncan was saying as Monica looked around, "so you'll really be a welcome addition. Well, I was going to introduce you to your new office mates," she continued, "but they both seem to be out to lunch."

Catching sight of Monica's disappointed face, she added, smiling,

"Don't worry, you'll meet everyone Monday morning. I have to go on to the Art Department with this manuscript now. You can find your way to the elevators, can't you?"

Monica replied that she could and quickly expressed her thanks. Mrs. Duncan said good-bye, then started to walk briskly down the hall, one hand holding her large black hat in place. Suddenly she turned and called out,

"Have a good, restful week end. You'll need

plenty of energy, once you start working on our magazine!"

As she stepped on the elevator and the doors closed slowly before her, Monica pulled on her gloves. She caught a glimpse of herself in the side mirror. Her short black hair was still trimly in place; her brown eyes were smiling. She was breathlessly happy that the interview had gone so well.

It's going to sound funny when I tell Mom, she thought, but I do believe I got that job thanks to the leak in our living room ceiling!

The brisk, busy personnel director who had confronted her when she first presented herself at the magazine had been rather intimidating to a girl just three days out of high school. Even after Monica found herself inside the Editor-in-Chief's office, the feeling of tenseness continued, in spite of the fact that the room itself was relaxing, hushed by a thick green carpet, by walls and furnishings in low keys of olive and gold. Then Monica had noticed a soggy gap in the ceiling, and, in her nervousness, she had blurted out about their own ceiling at home. After that, words had come much more easily as Mrs. Duncan deftly led the conversation from the ceiling to her home, her family and school life—and her hopes for the future.

And now look at me, she wanted to say aloud as

she pushed open the glass door leading into the street, I'm Monica Cole, a sophisticated career girl! New York's Madison Avenue, with its precise little stores and smartly dressed people, had always appealed to her. And beginning Monday, she would be working right there, on one of the best women's magazines in town, among the very people she had always admired. It was almost too much to believe!

Monica quickened her steps, and soon her short, slim figure was swallowed up in the crowd.

At the dinner table that night, even her two sisters sat in respectful silence as Monica recounted her triumph in securing a job.

"I'm really proud of you, darling," her mother beamed, "getting a summer job on a fine magazine like *Living Today* without any previous experience."

"Oh, Mommy, how can you say I have had no experience?" Monica interrupted in mock indignation. "What about the paper I edited in school?"

Mr. Cole came to his daughter's defense. "And who won a first prize for her short story? You haven't forgotten that, Alice?"

He turned to Monica, winking, then said more seriously, "I'm really happy, and, I must admit, a little amazed, too, that it was as easy as that. We both know how much you wanted to work on a magazine. Only . . ." he hesitated, concern showing in his eyes,

then continued, "you realize how much your mother and I had hoped that you'd get a job as a camp counselor for the summer, darling, before you start going to college, right here in the city. A seventeen-year-old needs some fun and a lot of good, fresh air before she settles down to study at college.'

"Do you think you could please pass the potatoes, Dad, before we get Monica's future all tied up in more ribbons?" broke in Mary, her youngest sister.

"But Dad," Monica sounded alarmed, "I've already told Mrs. Duncan that I'd take the job. I promise to go to the beach on week ends, honestly, and get plenty of sunshine there. Besides, if that Cornell scholarship I tried for does come through, I'll be going away to college come fall, instead of staying in New York. Then I'd really be fresh-air happy!"

Margot, the middle sister, dropped her fork as the phone rang. "That must be for me," she called, running to answer. Then presently, with a wail, "No-o, it's for you, Monica. It's Sue, wanting to hear all about the . . . THE JOB."

Gulping down the last of her pie, Monica pulled a chair over to the phone, prepared for one of those long, lingering chats that she and her best friend found so indispensable.

From Monica's detailed description of her day, Sue quickly swung the conversation to the plaid shorts

and sleeveless blouse which she had just bought, in anticipation of her summer at the shore.

"When is Pete picking you up tomorrow night, Mo?" Sue inquired next. "Do you know what movie the boys want to take us to?"

But Monica hadn't heard from Peter, or given the movie much thought.

In fact, she realized a little later, while folding up her light blue bedspread and turning back the matching sheets, she'd had very little on her mind but magazines ever since she'd heard, a week ago, that publications sometimes hire high-school grads as summer help. It had sounded improbable, but she had thought it worth a try, because there was really nothing she would rather do for the summer than work on a magazine. Yet never in a million years had she dreamed that the job would truly be hers!

Standing in the subway on her first ride to work, with people pushing at her from all sides, Monica tried with difficulty to read the paper as casually as the other business people were reading theirs. It must take years of commuting to balance yourself on a strap and absorb the news at the same time, she decided, noticing the white gloves she had washed last night already blackened with print—and goodness knows what all this jamming is doing to my suit!

Laying her clothes out the night before had been

the springboard to a family confab, with Margot, just emerging from the blue-jean stage, suggesting Monica's new pink silk, and nine-year-old Mary offering her favorite old sweater to make her sister feel at home. They had finally settled on a beige cord suit, which made Monica feel trim and self-confident.

She had expected to be the first one to appear at the offices of *Living Today*, having allowed herself more than enough time to get to work at nine-thirty. But bent low over a desk by the window, she found a blonde girl, half hidden by a pile of letters.

"Hi," said the girl, looking up. "I'm Lynn Gordon, Reader Mail Editor. I guess you must be our new floater."

"Your new what?" Monica tried not to appear too bewildered.

"Oh, you know," Lynn Gordon laughed, "a girl who floats from office to office, helping where she's needed. Though, if I had my way, I'd lock the door and keep you all for our department. Look at this!" She spread her arms wide. "Just last month, we ran an article on working mothers and it drew such a tremendous response that we've had to come in way early in the morning to catch up."

"You mean you answer every letter that comes to the magazine?" Monica asked.

"Oh, sure. In fact, that'll be one of your first jobs, bringing letters that require specific answers to the

right departments," Lynn replied, and then added, "but before I tell you any more about your job, I think I'd better take you around and introduce you to the rest of the staff."

To Monica, the morning was a succession of faces bobbing up briskly from behind desks and typewriters. Only the backgrounds changed. The Art Department, with its rows of fluorescent lamps clipped to drafting tables; the Beauty office, each available inch harboring lipsticks, cream jars and colored bottles; the Decorating studio, lavishly furnished in Victorian style; these had made the biggest impression.

The opening of one door had released the pungent odor of fish. An agitated woman had come forward and chased the two girls out again, explaining that they were in the midst of photographing.

"They can't interrupt their session," Lynn told Monica. "Can't have perishable food under hot lights too long, you know."

The electric clock on the wall said twelve noon by the time the pair reached the Fashion office. For a moment, Monica thought she was in the stock room of a department store, a very disorderly one at that. She stared, puzzled, at the rack of wool dresses and winter coats, at the fur boots on the floor, the boxes upon boxes of jewelry and belts. A young woman walked by. She wore a cocktail dress but was barefoot.

"You haven't flipped, really not. We're just working on our fall fashion issue." A friendly voice emerged from behind a desk piled with evening slippers.

Lynn introduced Enid Gold, a pretty, red-headed copy writer. Then she told Monica, "You've probably met enough people for one morning. Shall we postpone the Advertising Department until you've had some lunch?"

Monica seemed bewildered. "Okay. Is there a place nearby where I can get something to eat?"

"Why don't you sit down and wait five minutes," suggested Enid. "I'm going to have lunch as soon as I finish writing this caption, and you can come along with me."

Monica nodded gratefully and thanked her guide for the tour, although how she would ever remember all those names she surely didn't know. And now Lynn Gordon was saying that, since Monica still had five minutes, she might as well come next door and meet the Fiction Editor.

"Oh, you can't forget *him*." Enid winked impishly. "He's our one eligible bachelor . . . even if he does bite people's heads off—or ignore them. The others, alas, are all spoken for—not that it matters to me," she added, fondly patting the gold ring on her left hand.

British walking oxfords and beige cashmere socks were the first thing Monica saw when she went inside

the Fiction office. The editor's long, lean frame was at a 120 degree angle, tipped way back in a swivel chair. His face was hidden behind a manuscript, with only a shock of blond hair showing above the papers.

"Oh, hello," Willard Kimball said, without looking up, as he was introduced to Monica. The two girls stood for a few seconds, waiting for him to put down the manuscript, then Lynn shrugged her shoulders, and they walked out.

Half an hour later, Monica and Enid, the fashion copy writer, were seated in front of heaping plates of Swedish delicacies. The tiny restaurant where they had gone had a colorful smorgasbord table off to one side. Small tables for two and four took up all the space in the room, and lively conversations were barely interrupted as more and more newcomers squeezed by. What a happy change from the school cafeteria, Monica thought, recalling steel counters and dietetic food. She wondered, too, how often her salary would withstand lunches like this.

Between trips to the smorgasbord table, she eagerly questioned Enid about her fashion job.

"Oh, I like writing fashion copy well enough. In fact," Enid related between bites of liver paté, "during my three years on the magazine, I've worked in just about every department and enjoyed them all.

But," she added emphatically, "Entertainment is really my first love."

Monica remembered a large room, a bookcase filled with theatrical and movie magazines and directories, stacks of photos from recent films, and an earnest-looking young woman, in a chic red hat, taking notes as she listened to a jazz recording.

"Now, that really sounds like fun," Monica agreed.

"It sure is, although interviewing people isn't always exactly a lark. They can be pretty difficult at times. But I always thought it was quite a challenge, trying to capture a personality on paper."

"I'm pretty interested in writing, too," Monica confessed, going on to explain that she hoped this job might somehow give her an opportunity to express herself. As a matter of fact, she promptly confided to Enid, she was already planning to rewrite a short story for which she had won a prize in high school and submit it to the Fiction Editor. "Even if you did paint a pretty dim picture of his personality." She laughed. "You were right, though. Mr. Kimball was so busy with his manuscripts he didn't even look up when he said hello."

"Slow down, there," Enid said, a friendly warning in her gray eyes. She chopped with her fork into the hard meringue of the apple cake. "When I started, I thought, too, that the magazine was just waiting for a bright new talent. But it takes a while to break

through. A girl friday seldom gets a crack at writing."

"Oh, well," Monica sighed contentedly, "I'll be going to college in the fall, so I won't have to worry about breaking through for another four years."

The waitress brought their check, and Enid peered at her wrist watch. "Gosh, I didn't realize how long we'd been here!"

At the cashier's desk, Monica was relieved to see that Enid hadn't caused her to splurge, after all. As the two girls made their way out into the sunny street, she found herself wanting to hurry back to the magazine, anxious to see what the rest of the day would bring.

CHAPTER TWO

A STRANGE SMELL wafted out to Monica when she opened the door to the Cole apartment that evening. Mary ran out of the kitchen, brown pigtails flying, a damp cloth clutched in her hand. Monica followed her into the living room, where Mrs. Cole was crouching on the floor, vigorously wiping a spot on the rug.

"Just wait until your father sees this," she was murmuring, unaware of Monica's entrance. "It's an old rug, that's true, but this is no time for us to be buying a new one. And oh, look, Mary, it really did make a hole! It isn't just a stain."

Mary stood there, the wet rag dripping on the floor. "I only wanted to show Mother what I made with my

new chemistry set," she explained to Monica, a big tear streaking down her freckled nose.

"I know, dear, but why don't you call me, instead of carrying all kinds of acid around the house? I could easily have come to your room. You don't see Daddy carrying test tubes back and forth, do you?" Mother's voice was slow and strained, in an effort to keep her temper. "You know, now that you're nine, perhaps he'll let you share the spare bathroom for your experiments. Let's try asking him again," she sighed. "Would you promise to be careful and not go near his things?"

Monica kissed her mother and gave Mary a wink. "Bet you never dreamed when you married Daddy that you'd have more than one chemical engineer in the family." Laughing, she headed toward her room.

"I certainly didn't." Mrs. Cole shook her head in pretended despair. "It never occurred to me your father would be setting up a laboratory at home, either, in addition to the one in New Jersey. Oh, well, Mary, we'll just have to move the coffee table over the hole. There's not much use wiping it any more."

"Let me put my things down and wash my face," Monica called to her sister, trying to cheer her up, "and then you can help me set the table for dinner. I'm pooped after my long day at work, which *you* all seem to have forgotten!"

"Oh, Monica, of course we haven't forgotten," Mrs. Cole hastened to reassure her. "You just happened to walk in at the height of a crisis. I'm dying to hear all about it, although I guess you might as well wait and tell us everything when Daddy comes home. I even made chocolate cake for dessert, just to show you how we feel about having another breadwinner in the family!"

This was enough to incite a burst of activity in the two sisters. In celebration, they decided on a tablecloth, instead of place mats, and jelly jars were discarded in favor of the new glassware the three girls had given their mother for her birthday. Even Margot emerged from her room in time to fuss with a bowl of flowers for a centerpiece. They were all standing back, admiring their handiwork, when the phone rang, and a disappointed Margot announced that Peter wanted Mo.

"Oh, why doesn't he call?" Margot exclaimed wistfully, and to Monica's inquiring look she replied, "That terrific boy I met at the tennis courts . . ."

Monica slipped off her shoes as she picked up the receiver, suddenly conscious that her feet ached. I must have walked miles, she thought, going from one office to another, meeting people. And I'll have to be shuttling the mail around, day after day. Guess I'm not used to so many hours in high heels.

"Hi, Pete!" She smiled into the receiver, then

found herself shaking her head at his suggestion that they go bowling after dinner.

"Oh, no," she told him sadly, "I just couldn't stay on my feet all evening, too. You come on over, and we can listen to records. I have a wonderful new album of Calypsos."

"I can't, Mo, I promised the gang I'd bowl with them tonight." Pete sounded disappointed. "You know, I don't have many more evenings before I'm off to camp."

A swimming counselor has to be in good physical condition, Pete went on to remind her, and bowling would help loosen him up.

After she hung up, Monica felt a twinge of regret as she thought of the carefree time Pete would be spending for the next two months, and of the early morning swims she would be missing. She had a sudden picture of a campfire and Pete with his arm around a suntanned girl. Ah, I know, she thought reproachfully, you can't have your cake and eat it, too.

What's more, she decided, if Pete was going into training, she might as well limber up for her job, too. She'd get down to her short story right away. It would no doubt sound high-schoolish to her already, and call for some real work.

She sat down at her desk, pencil in hand, and earnestly began to read her story. Then a thought struck

her. She went to the closet and reached up for the white straw sailor she had boug[illegible] just before Easter. She placed it way on the back [illegible] her head, glanced briefly in the mirror, then went back to work, a happy smile on her face, feeling just like an editor, hat and all.

Several times a day Mrs. Duncan's secretary, Katie Graham, had been coming to Monica's desk with boxes of letters to the editor which required specific answers from the various heads of departments.

Requests for advice on beauty care, job placement, recipes, personal problems, all quickly found their destinations as Monica, first tentatively, then with growing assurance, sorted and delivered hundreds of letters each day. This, along with the careful watering of Miss Graham's ivy and Mrs. Duncan's philodendron plants, accounted for the major part of her working schedule. By the end of the second week, Monica proudly announced to her office mates that she had time to spare and wanted to take on more responsibilities.

"Better tell Katie Graham first, before heralding such glad tidings to all and sundry," suggested Lynn Gordon, who was inclined to talk as if she were writing and was often given to sweet and feeling recitations from *Winnie the Pooh*. "You'll be swamped with work if you're not careful."

During the next afternoon, the three heads in the Reader Mail office popped up in surprise, one by one, as Willard Kimball walked into the room, saying, "I understand there's someone in here who can type a rush story for me."

Monica answered eagerly. "Oh, certainly, Mr. Kimball, how many copies do you need?"

"Well, the usual eight." Then he looked puzzled. "But I don't know, have you ever done this before? Are you a new girl?"

"I'll show her how to do it, Willard," Lynn said coldly. The young editor nodded and walked out.... After one look at Monica's expression, Lynn reminded her, "Don't you remember about him? He ignores people."

But still, thought Monica, reaching for the carbon paper, I've been in and out of his office about four times a day for two weeks....

When she had been typing steadily for an hour, Monica stopped for a minute to stretch her arms and rub her tired back. Time had whisked by, she realized, because the story was interesting and really held her attention. In fact, her hands had trouble keeping up with her eyes as they hurried down the page. Her own story really didn't compare with this, she thought, a little unhappily. Not yet.

She turned back to her work, then stopped again with a frown on her face. Somewhere at the begin-

ning Monica remembered reading about Aunt Sabena's blue eyes. Yet now the author mentioned them specifically as being brown. Might Mr. Kimball have overlooked this inconsistency? The Reader Mail girls thought she should let it go, the proofreader was sure to find the error. Willard, they felt, would undoubtedly think she was being pushy. So Monica typed along. But I'm doing a job, she told herself after a few minutes. I might as well do it right.

She picked up the finished pages of the manuscript, deciding to freshen up in the ladies' room on her way down the hall. Her own brown eyes looked tired—or maybe a little worried—as they gazed back at her from the mirror. Oh, come on, you're only doing what's right, she encouraged herself, and in a few seconds she was knocking at the Fiction office door with assurance.

"Wait a second," Mr. Kimball said from behind a manuscript. Then, as he finished the page, he looked up at her.

"All through typing? Put my two copies on the book rack, and I suppose you know about bringing the original to Liz Duncan and the rest to Production?" The stern blue eyes signaled that he wanted no interruptions.

"Well, no, not—not exactly," stammered Monica, feeling uncertain again. "I'm almost through, but could I just ask you a question?"

His eyebrows rose behind the black-rimmed glasses. "What's the matter? Can't read my corrections?"

"Well, there's one correction I think you overlooked." She pointed out the contradiction that had her puzzled, and he nodded his agreement as he penciled in the change.

"Okay, thanks. You'd better hurry up and finish it. This really has to get to the printer tonight." And, as Monica moved toward the door, he asked, "What did you say your name was?"

"Monica Cole," she answered, and turned in surprise as she heard him singing:

"Monica, Monica, dance with me?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Oh, it's a tune from Menotti's opera, *The Medium*." He actually smiled a bit as he spoke. "She's a child, playing at being grown up."

Now, did he mean that about me, Monica wondered as she walked back to her desk. Well, anyway, he didn't get mad. And maybe next time he'll remember me, she told herself with determination.

CHAPTER THREE

DEAR SUE: I can't believe that I haven't yet answered your letter. I've had it pinned to my bulletin board for almost a month. I've been so busy at work and so tired in the evenings that I've only had just enough energy to send Pete a few droopy lines. I wish I could pick up the phone and call you instead of having to write. But tonight is as good a time as any to tell you of the exciting thing that happened to me today.

Ann MacLeod, the Assistant Entertainment Editor, needed some stills from a new movie. (Listen to me, sprouting trade jargon! Stills are pictures to you, just like a blurb is a subtitle and a widow is a word that's set up in print alone on a line. Professional, hey what?) Anyway, I nonchalantly hailed myself a taxicab—for which petty cash will pay tomorrow—and got off at the

New York offices of Royal Studios. It's a big, ancient building which used to be a warehouse, but they shot movies there before the industry moved to Hollywood. There was an information desk, like in a department store, and a uniformed clerk to tell me where to find the publicity department. Well, as I waited for the elevator, I overheard a group of people discussing a screening they were about to see. Imagine, going to the movies in the morning! Our Entertainment Editor sometimes goes to three a day—and calls it work!

On the eleventh floor, I stood around in the reception room, staring at all the autographed photos of movie stars hanging on the pine-paneled walls. Finally, a door was opened, and they officially waved me into what looked like a movie-type newspaper office. It must have been nearly a whole street block of desks, men and women all wearing hats, yelling at each other, banging on typewriters, answering telephones . . . it was wild. I finally found the girl in charge of magazine publicity. She glared at me from under creamy blue eyelids, then muttered something about this being no time to bother her about a movie that won't be released until Christmas. But she handed me the shots anyway. She sounded throaty, like Tallulah Bankhead, and her desk had a clutter of frames, each holding an autographed picture of an actor. I wanted to look around some more, but everyone seemed too hectic.

Going back to the elevator, our publicist friend nearly collided with me in her dash down the hall. And next thing, she was booming through a doorway, "Come

along, darling, they're all waiting for us in the projection room."

And do you know who "darling" was? You'll never guess. It was Dane Todd! Handsomer even than in "The Scarlet Sword." We actually went down in the same elevator, five floors. Then the publicist woman noticed me and said, just as sweet as could be, "This young lady is from *Living Today*. They're doing a spread on you for their November issue."

I was dying to gush how thrilled I was to meet him, of course, but I remembered my role as a representative of the magazine and said a dignified how do you do. Now I know I've matured!

You're practically the first person I've told about the great encounter. When I got back to the office, bursting with the news, the Entertainment Editor, Teresa Conti, was in a rage about the pictures not being there yet. I guess Ann was supposed to get them yesterday and forgot. Of course, Terry wasn't mad at me in particular, but some of the sparks flew off in my direction. She seems hard to work for, though luckily most of the staff are very nice. I've had lunch several times with a swell girl named Enid Gold. (She hasn't taken your place, though. I do miss your loving face.) She's about twenty-two and married. Her husband picked her up the other day, and he looks just like a husband should. His hair is thinning a little, but he's cute. Must be about twenty-seven or so. There's a fellow here a few years younger, our Fiction Editor, a sort of boy wonder. He was described to me as an "enfant terrible," but I've discovered

he's not so bad. He wears the most wonderful British-type clothes.

Well, enough of this job-talk. Now that I've had my big day, I don't really feel too envious of you, sprawled on that beautiful beach. And how are the life guards this year? Thank your parents very, very much for asking me up. I'd love to come some week end soon. And now to bed. Lots of love,

Mo

The letter finished, Monica went into the kitchen for her nightly snack before bedtime. Mr. Cole was fixing himself a sandwich. A short, thin man in his middle forties, he looked startled as she appeared.

"Not asleep yet?" he asked, wiping a drop of milk from his black mustache. "You know, I worry about you, working in the city in all this heat."

"Oh, Dad, the heat doesn't bother me a bit, and I haven't been staying up late every night. But tonight I just had to get a letter off to Sue." She poured herself a glass of milk. "By the way, Daddy, Sue's parents wondered whether I could come up one of these week ends. Would it be all right to go?"

"As far as I'm concerned, you can go up any time. It's very nice of the Nichols to ask you. Much better than the long trek to Jones Beach on Sundays, I should think." Leaning back in his chair, he continued, "Sometimes, honey, I think your mother is right, wanting a house in the country. I've always

loved living in New York, but I can see now," he sighed, "what an advantage it would be if you girls could be out of the city in the summer."

Monica leaned over to pat his hand. "Oh, Dad, you've seen the letters from Margot and Mary. They love Girl Scout camp, even if there aren't any boys around for Margot. And you know how much I wanted to work in the city this summer. I really like my job. I almost hate to think of leaving it in the fall."

"And that's another thing I've had on my mind. You really ought to go to an out-of-town school. I've always regretted not having lived on a campus. I only wish my salary had gone up proportionately with college tuitions."

"Well, hey! Doesn't anybody have any faith in me?" Monica managed a highly indignant look. "Maybe I shouldn't say it, but I just might get that scholarship, after all. And besides, even if I don't, I'm not going to shed any tears about going to school in New York. I love this town every bit as much as you do." In punctuation, she jammed the lid back on the peanut butter jar with her fist. Then she went to the sink to rinse out their glasses.

Through the open window, she caught sight of the wide reaches of Central Park, directly below. Footpaths, roadways, looping and crossing, looked like rivers of light, turning the now blackened meadows and rocks into islands. Late as it was, all the benches

were crowded with people, waiting for relief from the warm, oppressive weather. Bordering the park on every side, thousands of lighted windows cut into the darkness. New York never seems to go to sleep, she thought, reluctant to turn away. It was hard to explain to her father how she felt, but from childhood on she'd been glad of apartment-house living. She liked the view, the perspective. It was like being on a perch, she thought, from which one could see miles into the distance.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVERY TIME Monica walked by Willard Kimball's office that day, her heart did a butterfly dance into her stomach. It had started on her way to work, as soon as she had mailed the envelope containing her short story, and all day the ring of the phone on her desk brought the feeling back. She made a point of going into the Fiction office many more times than was necessary, and each time the palms of her hands grew cold and moist. Yet she knew perfectly well that it takes more than twelve hours for letters to be delivered and that her manuscript would be caught under tons of other correspondence at the central post office, even though she had dispatched it on its way only half a block from her office building.

During the last few weeks, Monica had really settled down to cutting and shaping her prize story. She had re-evaluated and rewritten "Teacher's Pet" until there was very little left of the original—until she thought she had included all she'd learned by studying the manuscripts as she typed them for the Fiction Department. At last she'd been so eager to have Mr. Kimball see it that she had spent half the night typing it clean. The title page had given her one brief moment of hesitation: should she use a pen name, like Monica Marlow or Monique du Mont? (She laughed to think she was getting as bad as her parents, obsessed by the letter M in their choice of names.) Finally she decided that, as an author, she would have to have the courage of her own convictions, and besides, how would Mr. Kimball know who the author was if she used a pen name? And she really did want him to know, because, she realized with some surprise, she was very anxious for a heart-to-heart talk with him about writing, critical judgment, a writer's ambitions . . . or maybe just for a talk with him.

But the day went by with only a "Hi" and a "Thank you" and no more recognition than that from the Fiction Editor.

With the passing of the week, Monica's nervousness increased, and finally gave way to discouragement as still no word came about "Teacher's Pet." Ready to pop, Monica confided what she had planned

to keep secret to Enid during one of their frequent lunches together.

"You can't expect him to have seen it yet," Enid said with conviction. "You know how the manuscripts pile up on his desk every day, and his assistant has been away on her honeymoon for over a month. That's what happens on a women's magazine," she laughed, "everybody's always getting married, or having babies, and interfering with the office routine. And it's a good thing, too."

"Oh, I suppose so," Monica sighed. "I just thought that if he noticed my name on the manuscript, he might have looked at it ahead of the others."

"Not a chance, not with him," declared Enid. "I can't see him being that human. To be honest, I would hate to have to discuss any work of mine with that old grizzly bear. The funny thing is, you don't seem to mind."

And she gave Monica a suspicious glance.

It was getting close to noontime the next day when Monica came into the Fiction Department with the second mail.

"How about grabbing some lunch with me?" Willard Kimball was on the phone while Monica looked for a free space on his desk on which to drop her bundle. "Hang it, it takes me half an hour every time

I want to talk to this agent," he said. "How about some lunch?"

Monica turned to leave.

"Hey, I mean you," he said more loudly.

Monica whirled around, feeling her cheeks flame up in surprise. "Who, me?"

"Yes, you, but not if it takes you that long to answer a question. I'm hungry!"

"Why, yes. I . . . I'd like to very much."

"All right. Like Japanese food?" She nodded, not intending to admit she'd never tasted it.

"I'll meet you in front of the Tokyo in fifteen minutes."

"In front of the Tokyo," Monica repeated to herself as she powdered her nose in the ladies' room. That means he's probably no more anxious than I am to have everybody see us. Wouldn't you know he'd ask me out just the day Mother made up sandwiches for me. And I can't even give them away, or everyone would wonder where I'm going. Who would believe that Willard Kimball would pull his nose out of a manuscript long enough to take me out to lunch? Oh! She started at the thought of the word manuscript. . . . Who am I kidding? This isn't a date. He wants to discuss my short story. It could mean he liked it!

But waiting for the elevator, she wasn't so sure, and locked her fingers tightly. Suddenly she realized

she'd forgotten her gloves and ran back down the hall to her office.

Lynn was combing her hair, ready to go out, too. "What are you in such a tizzy about?"

"Sorry, haven't time to tell you now." And Monica flew out, anxious to be downstairs and away before Lynn was ready. The elevator descended quickly, tumbling up something inside her. Was it the twenty-four-story drop, she wondered, or just her own excitement?

Willard Kimball, his hands in his pockets, was looking at an immense china cat in a shopwindow next to the restaurant. His cord suit appeared wilted, like everything else in this heat, Monica noticed. I wonder who looks after his clothes, she mused, remembering that one of the girls had once told her his family was in Boston.

"I hope I'm not late," she apologized, as he took her arm and guided her up the narrow flight of outside stairs that led to the Tokyo.

Still conscious of the touch of his hand on her arm, she walked into the carpeted dining room. Two orderly rows of tables marked each side; the walls were decorated with long scrolls, picturing hazy landscapes, dragons and birds. On their table were an old-fashioned burner and a cast-iron skillet.

"We'll have two clear soups and two sukiyaki," Willard Kimball said to the waiter, ignoring the prof-

fered menu. "Do you want the chicken or the beef?" He turned to Monica, then quickly back to the waiter. "Oh, let's have the beef. It adds more flavor."

Monica sat dazed, relieved she hadn't had to decide, curious about how the lunch would turn out, but much more concerned with what Willard Kimball would have to say about her story.

"You know, I had no idea a little thing like you would be interested in writing," Willard Kimball suddenly started. "I guess that's my fault. I never really bother to find out what anyone on the magazine is thinking."

Monica looked at him, not knowing what to say.

"I might as well tell you immediately. Your story isn't for us."

She didn't know disappointment could hit so hard. Her forehead started to perspire; a wave of heat spread from her scalp to her toes. She even wondered if she was going to be ill.

"I see. I didn't realize it was that bad. I really worked so hard to get it right."

"Now, wait a minute. I said nothing about it being that bad. It's just not suitable for us. Your ideas are good, and you write about things you know—and that's very, very important—but I think you tried too hard. You were thinking about wanting to *sell* this to the magazine, about pleasing the kind of people you were hoping would be your readers. Don't you

agree? Write the way you feel, instead of the way you think you should feel, see what I mean?"

Monica tried hard to concentrate on what he was saying, rather than on her own unhappiness. "Yes, I can see that, Mr. Kimball. As a matter of fact, perhaps I did try too hard to model my piece after the manuscripts I have been typing for you. . . ."

"You know, my friends—not the people on the magazine, I can't claim many friends there—call me Bill. How about that? Or Willard? But that Mr. Kimball bit makes me out to be too ancient."

Monica had to smile despite herself, and she looked up to see the waiter setting down two small red lacquered trays holding table silver and chopsticks wrapped in cellophane. When the soup was placed before her, Monica remembered a childhood present: a small sea shell that opened in a glass of water to release a softly-hued paper flower. Afloat in the amber consommé were flower-shaped vegetables of different colors, contrasting with the black lacquer soup bowl.

Willard continued analyzing her story, pointing out sections where her attempts to be slick were not in keeping with the mood. And Monica listened intently, grateful for his criticism. Then, as the waiter reappeared, her eyes widened in amazement.

"Say, haven't you ever had sukiyaki before?" asked

Willard. Monica confessed that actually she had never had Japanese food in her life.

"The Japanese believe that even food should appeal to the eye," he went on to explain.

Monica nodded her own affirmation as the waiter lowered a colorful platter, seeming to take her delight as a personal compliment. The white of the mushrooms, the red of the meat, the various shades of green, from bamboo shoots to spinach, formed a striking pattern which remained undisturbed as he skillfully swept them into the cast-iron pan. In one moment the saki had been added, the brazier lit, and he had left the two to their conversation.

"I started submitting my stories to magazines when I was a freshman at Harvard, you know. Had enough rejection slips to paper my walls with," Willard said, looking at her intently. "It was darn hard to imagine anything but a printing machine behind those slips, instead of an actual person, reading my stories and giving them real consideration." He hesitated for a moment. "I guess that's why I thought I'd sit down and discuss your piece with you. And I want you to know I'd be interested in seeing anything else you might be likely to concoct."

As he spoke, he made Monica forget the office Willard Kimball. He was no longer aloof, off in his personal world. He really cared about her story, and he

was talking to her as a friend, not as editor to beginner.

"Well, that's just what I'll be, a freshman in college, in less than a month," Monica explained, startled to discover that she wasn't entirely happy at the prospect. "I guess I won't have much time before school starts to rework 'Teacher's Pet,' but if it's all right, I'd certainly love to send you whatever writing I do at college."

"Oh, then you mean you were just hired for the summer?" Willard asked in surprise. "I thought you looked a little young for a college grad. In that case, I don't really know how much time you'll have for writing anything other than freshman themes. They keep you hopping your first year, you know."

"Well, you seem to have found time for gathering rejection slips, and I'll be needing new wallpaper for my room, too. Besides, I want to have a hand at keeping your desk piled high with manuscripts!" Her voice was happy again. Nothing could really erase the disappointment of having her piece rejected; yet she knew, as he talked on about manuscripts and young writers, that his interest in her efforts had given her a full measure of encouragement.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOING HOME in the subway, Monica didn't even attempt her nightly struggle with the evening paper. Just getting out at the right stop was an effort, for her mind was filled to the brim with new plans.

It had been a particularly busy afternoon because she had answered an SOS from the Entertainment Department whose secretary was ill. Typing the movie reviews was one of her favorite chores, not only because Teresa Conti had a fine, biting sense of humor, but because Monica rather enjoyed the feeling of being on the inside whenever she went home and was asked for details about forthcoming films. She had come back to her own desk from the Entertain-

ment office and found a message to call her mother.

"I should have told the operator to switch my calls to Entertainment," she said to Lynn as she dialed the number.

"Oh, if it had been a male voice, I would have had you paged," Lynn replied lightly. "But it was only your mother, so I figured it could wait."

But for once Mrs. Cole hadn't called to ask her daughter to pick up some groceries on the way home. There was a letter from the scholarship board, she told Monica, excitement in her voice. And the answer was yes!

"I knew how anxious you were to hear, Monica, so I opened the letter. I hope you won't mind," her mother was saying, and Monica could only babble about how happy she was, how she hadn't really thought she'd win the scholarship.

Now, as she walked out of the subway station and over to Central Park West, she thought about Cornell, constructing in her mind all the things she had heard about its beautiful campus. Living on my own will really be great, she thought excitedly, and how wonderful to study without Margot's phonograph booming in the next room! Of course, the scholarship will only cover half the tuition, but there must be ways I can earn some more, she told herself, so Mother and Dad won't have to bear too much of the expense. I might even be able to get an office job,

now that I've held one for so many weeks. And for the fiftieth time since graduation, she thanked the secretarial course she had taken in high school.

Her family was just as excited as Monica was about the new prospects ahead. Mrs. Cole hugged her warmly as she came in and from then on gave her very little chance to talk about her ideas, so absorbed was she in scheduling shopping trips.

Finally Monica managed a protest. "Look, Mother, I have all the clothes I'll need. If I had stayed in New York, I wouldn't have gotten too many things . . ."

"Now, honey, you'll find that shopping won't be at all convenient up there, and you certainly will need a formal of some sort and a new bathrobe to wear around the dorm, and there'll be football games, receptions . . ."

"Oh, Mommy, I'm not going to be a playgirl! I'm going to be a work-bent, serious-minded student!" Nevertheless, her interest had been sparked . . . But then she remembered she had been hired to work at the magazine until the end of the month. "Come to think of it, Mommy, I really won't have much time to run around the stores. I've still got a job, you know."

Margot, sprawled on the couch, had been listening quietly to the commotion. Browned and glowing after her stay at camp, she now resembled Monica a little less, although they had often been mistaken for twins. Margot had always looked more mature than

her fifteen years and had already caught up with her older sister in height, a source of great satisfaction to her and of considerable annoyance to Monica.

"Oh, wouldn't you know," she complained, "that Monica would be going to Cornell, of all places! There'll be so many boys and dances and games to go to, and all she cares about is mere writing. Why can't it happen to me?"

"Well, what are you so worried about? You've still got two years of high school to go," her older sister teased. "Although, if you don't stop being so man-conscious and do some work, no college will have you. But maybe," she continued more soothingly, "I'll ask you up for some week ends and leave a boy or two for you. You can have the freshmen, as a matter of fact. I'll only be interested in upper classmen." Monica threw herself down beside her sister and patted her pert, but at the moment thoroughly glum, face.

Mr. Cole was a picture of delighted, prideful parenthood the moment he heard the news. He had barely removed his hat when his four girls, as he liked to call them, gathered around to read him the letter and ply him with questions.

He backed into the living room, holding them off with his hands. "Whoa! One at a time, please! Well, yes, I think Monica probably does need ski pants, since it gets pretty cold around Ithaca, and no, I don't

think we should all take the ride up with her, Mary. I doubt she'd need us. And you have your own school to worry about, you know!"

After dinner, the family took up the subject again, and it suddenly occurred to Mrs. Cole that a visit to the dentist would also be a good idea.

"What with shopping, the dentist and the fact that you should be getting some rest, Monica," George Cole suggested, "I think you'd better try to make arrangements to leave the magazine as soon as it's convenient." And by this time, the thought of a leisurely shopping trip through various college departments loomed so invitingly that Monica nodded agreement without further hesitation.

The next morning, having asked Katie Graham to make an appointment for her with Mrs. Duncan, Monica settled down to shuffling the mail. How many more times, she wondered, would she go through this routine? She really enjoyed it now; it gave her a feeling of being the link between the reader and the magazine. And for the first time since the scholarship notification had come, she became aware of how much she would miss her work and the people she had come to know.

Katie Graham called her in as soon as she got back from lunch, to say that Mrs. Duncan could see her right away.

"I'm glad you wanted to talk to me," Elizabeth Duncan said, switching from her reading glasses to her "talking glasses" at Monica's entrance. "I was going to ask you to stop in today."

Monica plunged right into her announcement. After explaining the details of the scholarship, she summed up with, "So you see, Mrs. Duncan, if it could be arranged, I'd like to leave as soon as it's convenient. My parents feel that I should have some time to rest before starting the term." She felt herself blushing apologetically for her parents' overanxiousness, now that she had taken the steps to cut her career days short.

Mrs. Duncan sat silently for a few seconds before she said, "I quite agree with them." She smiled. "I don't know many seventeen-year-olds who have spent as busy a summer as you have. If you like, I think we can arrange things so you can leave by the end of the week. Most people have had their vacations by now, anyway, and we won't be so shorthanded." She picked up a pencil from the shaving mug on her desk and looked at it thoughtfully, obviously not yet ready to dismiss Monica.

"I probably shouldn't be telling you this. But I think you'd like to know how pleased we've been with your work. That's why I wanted to see you this afternoon."

Monica sat forward on the rim of her chair.

"As you know, the secretary in the Entertainment Department has been sick, and she has let me know that she is not coming back. Of course I knew about your plans to go to college, but I rather felt that you deserved being offered the job before we brought in someone from the outside. Now that you've been awarded a scholarship, naturally there's no question as to what you'll do. But you might try us again, four years from now," she concluded with a smile.

Monica sat dumbstruck. This was something entirely unexpected, a new opportunity that jarred her complacency. Yet her decision had been made. What could she say now? She left Mrs. Duncan's office with only a few inadequately expressed words of thanks.

She couldn't even bring herself to ask Enid for suggestions, as she had done so often during her stay at *Living Today*. What was the use of asking for advice, once a decision had been made, announced and set in motion?

All through dinner Monica stared through her drinking glass silently, while the rest of the family told of their day's happenings. Over dessert, she finally pulled herself together enough to describe her talk with Elizabeth Duncan.

"I know college is important," she said in a small voice at the end. "But, oh, how I wish I'd never been

told of this other possibility! Mrs. Duncan only did it to make me feel I had done a good job . . . I just wish I could accept both the job and the scholarship. If only I were twins!"

For a while her parents were silent, and Monica could sense how worried they were.

"Well, dear," Mrs. Cole said finally, "I do think it's wonderful for Mrs. Duncan to have offered you the job. They must have been very pleased with your work. And just think what confidence it will give you in school, to know you'd been considered for a permanent position!"

But I don't want the confidence, Monica was thinking, what I want is the job. . . . Her mind raced on. Why, within four years' time I might even be an editor. But if I leave now, I'll have a B.A. degree and I'll still be taking the mail around. She looked up and found her father's eyes upon her. A deep frown creased his face.

She caught her breath and plunged in. "Daddy, what would happen if . . . if I gave up college?"

"Oh, no, you couldn't do that!" Mrs. Cole said quickly. "I've regretted all my life never having gone to college. And I've always been so proud because I knew you would, and would do well. What kind of a future would you have in the magazine business, without a college education? And your scholarship? You can't want to throw that out of the

window?" Anxiously, she turned to her husband, silently pleading with him for support.

"But Mommy, I've been offered a job which will lead directly to writing, and that's just what I want to do. What could college give me to compare with that?"

Mr. Cole broke in forcefully. "Don't ever forget, Monica, that a writer needs all the knowledge he can get. You are going on with your schooling, that's definite."

"But, Dad . . ." Monica started.

"Now, just a minute. Remember you're only seventeen. Most young people your age don't know what direction to take."

"But I know, Dad. I really do." Monica sounded close to tears.

"I know you do," Mr. Cole continued sympathetically. "And I can understand how you hate to turn your back on this chance. That's the only reason for my making this suggestion, much as I hate to do it. Now, when I was your age, I had to go to college at night. It was the only way I could get an education. That is certainly not the case with you. But if this job means so very much to you, you might consider evening classes as a compromise. Only don't get too enthusiastic," he said at the sight of the smile spreading across her face. "To begin with, it would be a very heavy load to carry. And then you'll have

to find out the prerequisites—I'm not at all sure you would be accepted when you have such a demanding job."

Mrs. Cole was up in arms. "No! I won't have you traveling around New York in the evenings. Not to mention the fact that you'd be working eight hours a day. And then going up to school without proper meals. And don't you ever want to have time for dates? How can you even suggest such a thing?" she said to her husband, anger and disappointment in her voice.

"Because, Alice, I know how much the job means to her." Father's voice was soft but determined. "I think Monica feels about writing," he continued, "the same way I've always felt about chemistry."

Mrs. Cole nodded sadly. "I understand that, but . . ."

Monica interrupted quickly, afraid to let her mother voice too many more objections. "Let's just wait until I get all the information we need. I'll find out what sort of entrance exam I'd have to take, how many times a week I'd have to go . . . and whether Mrs. Duncan can hold off hiring someone else for a while. Then we can discuss it all again."

She got up and started carrying the dishes into the kitchen. While she washed them, Monica busily spoke about a hundred different things, eager to keep her mother from coming back to the subject of

school. She hurried through her chores and went to her room, knowing that as soon as the door was closed, Mr. and Mrs. Cole would have much to say to each other in their concern for her.

And she was somewhat concerned herself, she now admitted, as she looked in her closet for a dress to wear to work the next day. Work and school would be quite a schedule to carry. It would mean lots of adjustments, a new grown-up world to enter. But then, to have suggested it at all, her father must have felt certain enough that she could handle it, she thought, glad of his faith in her. Quite a step for him to take, she realized suddenly, remembering all the orderly plans her parents had laid for her, over so many years.

CHAPTER SIX

MONICA LOOKED up from the bluebook, her gaze wandering slowly around the large amphitheater. More than a hundred heads were bent low over the mimeographed examination sheets, and a large clock told her that she still had an hour to go, although three had already passed.

I really think I've done all I can, Monica thought, wondering whether the other students were still answering questions or merely checking over their work. She knew that she had left many sections unanswered, but she had been told that no one was really expected to complete an examination of this kind. The university merely wanted to gauge the applicants' level of schooling—or so she hoped!

As she looked around, she remembered her father telling her that many of the students taking evening courses would probably be mature men and women, engaged in business during the day. Gratefully, she noted that several people looked as young as she did.

She carefully rechecked her examination paper, making sure that she had answered all she could. Only a few people had left, and she wondered if it was all right to get up and hand her paper to the proctor. What's the sense of sitting here, she asked herself. I might change answers that were correct in the first place. There probably aren't too many of those, a cynical voice inside her whispered. Many of the questions had been difficult, and Monica smiled ruefully to herself, thinking that her conflict of school versus career was probably already solved, since she undoubtedly would not be accepted in the evening session.

A man ahead of her got up and walked down the steps of the amphitheater, examination paper in hand. Well, here goes, thought Monica, deciding to follow. She gathered up her papers and purse and walked toward the proctor, who was sitting on a chemistry counter, his eyes aimlessly roving over the symbols on the blue and yellow valence chart on the wall.

Out in the sunshine, Monica looked back to the building where she had taken the examination. As she walked by the Lowell Memorial Library, she was

tempted to take time to see more of the campus. But she was anxious to keep her date with Sue, who had come back to town the day before and was expecting her to drop in.

This summer really went fast, Monica thought as she boarded the bus heading down Riverside Drive. I never even managed to spend that week end with Sue and her parents. It seems to me I've done nothing but work. The bus sped down the tree-lined drive, and soon Monica could spot the giant SPRY sign which stood at the water's edge, on the Jersey side of the Hudson River. She jumped off the bus, eager to see her friend again, remembering the many evenings spent in Sue's room, doing homework together while, through the window, they could watch the bright orange sign, flicking on and off across the water. In time, they knew exactly how many seconds it took before SPRY FOR FRYING was replaced by SPRY FOR BAKING.

A while later, Monica was comfortably curled up on her friend's bed, drinking a Coke, and skimming through the letter Sue had just received from the girl who was to share her room at college.

"She sounds like a nice kid, doesn't she?" Sue asked. "I hope we'll see eye to eye on decorating our room." She opened the closet door and bent down, emerging with a large box from which she pulled yards of plaid material.

"Mother is going to help me make a bedspread and curtains out of this," she explained to Monica. Then she said more thoughtfully, "Gee, I wish you were going to room with me instead. We'll hardly ever see each other this way."

"It would have been fun, to go away together." Monica nodded, a little sadly. "Right now, though, what I want most of all is to know what is really going to happen to me."

"How soon will you know about the entrance exam?" Sue asked.

"They didn't say, but they'd better make it soon, before I explode from tension. Besides," Monica added, "Mrs. Duncan is more than willing to wait until I hear from Columbia, but she won't be able to hold the job for me forever." Then, noting Sue's quizzical expression, she went on, "I know, I know, I'm a mystery to you. If you had worked on a magazine, though, you'd understand how it can get under your skin. Then maybe you'd also see why I'm willing to pass up college."

"Must be that Fiction Editor." Sue laughed teasingly. "Poor Peter, does he know what kind of competition he's up against?"

Monica shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, Willard Kimball. He doesn't even know I'm alive! And I'm going out with Pete tomorrow night, so don't you

worry about him. He only just got back from camp this morning."

She put her Coke down on the floor, then let her arm hang limp at the side of the bed. I haven't seen Pete for two months, she thought, a little apprehensively, and truthfully, I haven't missed him too much. I wonder how well we'll hit it off. Will his talk seem as trivial as Sue's sometimes does to me now?

Monica need not have worried about her date with Pete. He seemed to have gone out of his way to make this a special evening, getting tickets for a musical and even taking a taxi to the theater. As the white-collared usherette showed them to their seats, Monica thought that perhaps he too feared that they had grown apart over the summer and wanted to make up for it. Ever since the beginning of their junior year in high school, they had been inseparable, and last year they had insisted on being junior counselors at the same camp. There was really no one with whom she felt more comfortable, Monica thought as she looked up happily into his round, humorous face and his smiling gray eyes.

The show over, Peter and Monica walked out of the theater arm in arm, humming a tune the heroine had sung in the second act. Sipping chocolate mint sodas at a nearby drug store, they swapped stories about the summer. Their letters, which had de-

creased in frequency after the first few weeks, had become more and more impersonal, and now they were busily filling in details.

Peter stirred his soda with great concentration, then he said, still staring at the ice cream in his glass, "I could understand your taking a job for the summer, Mo, even though it meant we didn't see much of each other. But I just don't see how you can pass up a chance to go to school out of town. I wouldn't miss it for anything." He looked at her and smiled. "Besides, if you went to Cornell, you could come over to Syracuse to see me on week ends . . . although you'd have a hard time knowing who to root for at football games!"

She ignored the way his eyes were laughing, thinking only of her own conflict. "Oh, Pete, don't you start in on me, too," she wailed. "Sue has been giving me the same line, making me feel like an odd shoe. I know I'll be missing a lot by not going away to school, but I've also discovered how much I'd miss if I did go. Besides, I can still come up week ends, if you'll ask me," she added, hopefully.

"You know I will," Pete told her sadly. "And we'll just have to see a lot of each other before I go. Say, why don't you take tomorrow afternoon off, and we can go over to Jones Beach. It's nice and empty at the end of the season!"

"But Peter, I can't. You forget I have a job. I'm

afraid you don't take my career very seriously," she said a little peevishly.

He looked at her and smiled—a superior smile, she thought. But in the taxi, as he held her tightly and told her how much he would miss her, she rested her cheek contentedly against the shoulder of his light tan jacket. She'd never convince her high school friends that there were things more exciting than four years at college, she thought with an inward sigh. She just hoped it wouldn't ever spoil her friendship with Pete!

CHAPTER SEVEN

DESPITE ALL her fears, Monica was accepted by Columbia University. The day after she heard the news, she arrived at work early, eager to start at her new desk. Happily she wheeled the typewriter that had been assigned to her for the duration of her stay at the magazine toward the Entertainment office. She hummed a song to the accompaniment of the rattling wheels of the typewriter stand. Suddenly Willard Kimball was pushing it for her, asking where she was headed.

"I'm the new secretary in the Entertainment Department, I'm not leaving to go away to college, I'm staying on here permanently and going to Columbia at night and I'm so happy I could flip!" She told him, all in one breath.

Willard sank back against the wall, letting out a long, low whistle. "Wait a minute! How did all this happen? *When* did it happen?"

Monica laughed. "Well, I was asked to stay on a few weeks ago, but my parents wouldn't give their consent until they knew I'd be able to take evening courses. Naturally, Mrs. Duncan didn't want me to mention working in Entertainment until I was sure I could take the job. And I just heard yesterday that I passed the entrance exam, so here I am!"

Still looking bewildered, Willard pushed his hands deep in his pockets. "Wow! You're going to be one heck of a busy girl! That's quite an assignment you've set for yourself, I must say. I've got to hand it to you for going ahead with it! Hey," he continued, "this calls for a celebration! How about having dinner with me tonight?"

Startled, Monica looked up at him, then quickly down at her plain red cotton dress. "Why, I—I'd love to," she stammered, "but—but I'm really not dressed for it. . . ."

"Oh, what you're wearing doesn't matter, not in the kind of place I like. Besides, what's wrong with what you have on? Red looks sort of nice on you."

"And my parents . . ." Monica went on.

"Call your mother up right now and ask if you may go, before your new boss comes in. Tell her I'll make sure you get home early."

"Okay. I'll let you know what they say. And thank you for inviting me, Willard," she called gaily after him as he walked out of her office.

She banged the typewriter against her new desk in her hurry to get to the phone and dialed quickly, not even bothering to sit down. It seemed forever before her mother answered and she could hardly contain her impatience as Mrs. Cole explained that she had been washing the breakfast dishes and hadn't heard the telephone ringing. Breathlessly Monica told her about Willard's invitation, her voice barely a whisper, although there was still no one in the office.

"That was very nice of him, dear," Mrs. Cole said, hesitating, "but I don't know . . . From what you've said about Mr. Kimball, it seems to me he's quite a bit older than you . . ."

"Oh, Mommy, it's not really a date. He's only being nice and asking me to celebrate my big decision. And it's just dinner. I'll be home early."

"Well, I wish your father were still home. I'm not sure what he'd say. We've never met Mr. Kimball, you know."

"But Mommy, he did ask me to check with you first. And honestly, he promised he'd take me home early!"

Somewhat reluctantly, Mrs. Cole agreed that it would be all right and wished her daughter an enjoyable celebration. Monica happily put down the re-

ceiver. She had started toward the door to tell Willard they were all set, when she suddenly realized that Ann MacLeod had already come into the office and was sitting at her desk, combing her blonde hair. Embarrassed, Monica apologized to the Assistant Editor for having been on the phone.

Ann threw up her hands and laughed. "Don't ever worry about me! I couldn't care less. Just watch your step when Terry is around and don't get me into trouble with her. But as far as I'm concerned, you can be on the phone all day. Anyway, the boss is at a screening this morning and won't be in till noon, so just go ahead wherever you were off to before you noticed I was here," she added with a smile.

Monica sat down in her strangely curved "posture" chair and shook her head. "Oh, it wasn't important," she said hastily. "What kind of work would you like me to get started on? Do you have any letters to dictate?"

"Oh, no," Ann replied. "Terry might occasionally ask you to take some shorthand. But most of the time she'll expect you to answer her mail yourself."

Just then the phone rang, and Ann immediately started arranging for an interview with a young recording star and had no time to give her new secretary further advice. So Monica spent the morning straightening her desk, making neat stacks of letterhead stationery, of white bond and yellow paper for

rough copies, of onionskin and envelopes of different sizes. Later, she acquainted herself with the filing system and straightened a shelf of *Variety*, *Billboard*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and other trade newspapers. "Sagebrushers Will Not Wind Up Kissing Hoss" read one of the headlines. Now what in the world does that mean, Monica wondered. I guess I'd better take some of these papers home one day soon and start learning the lingo.

She remembered a tip Enid had once given her about getting out rush copy and went back to her desk to make up a batch of "eights." She assembled seven sheets of onionskin and one of white bond, separating them with sheets of carbon and holding them together with a paper clip. There, she told herself as the pile of "eights" in her drawer grew to a respectable height, now I won't have to waste time making them up when the end of the month comes and copy is due! For the first time since she had started working at *Living Today*, Monica had a sense of being settled, of knowing what her contribution would be to the smooth running of the magazine, of being able to plan her work, instead of being called in any time someone needed help.

Toward noon, Monica gave in to her eagerness to tell Willard that their date was on. Teresa should be back any minute, she thought, so I'd better run down the hall now and tell him. On her way back from

Willard's office, it occurred to her that she was getting hungry. Maybe I should wait until Terry comes back before I go to lunch, she advised herself, so she can assign me my new duties. But to her dismay, she saw Teresa walking into their office just ahead of her. Wouldn't you know, she thought guiltily. I've been working hard all morning, and now it'll look as though I've been goofing.

At her desk, Ann was putting on lipstick. "Hi!" she said, greeting Teresa. "I'm off to interview Frankie Mitchell. We're having lunch at the Beautiful Naples with his press agent, and that'll give me a chance to have some lasagne. I haven't had it in ages!"

"What do you mean, you're off to interview Frankie Mitchell?" The editor's voice was icy. "What gave you the right to set up the interview?"

"But you said last week that we should do a story on him, so when his agent happened to call this morning, I just went ahead and set it up."

"I wasn't aware of having said that *you* should do a story on him. I have been discussing an angle with his recording company, and I'm not at all sure we'll be able to use your material. But I guess you'll have to go and see him anyway, now that you've made a date."

Angrily, Teresa turned her back on her assistant and started to go through the day's mail. For the

hundredth time, Monica scribbled her name on the blotter in an effort to appear unconcerned by what she had overheard. Won't Ann be allowed to write up her own interview, she asked herself in amazement? Why should Terry care about one more story in print, when her by-line appears so many times each month?

Teresa snatched up a proof that had been hidden by a pile of mail and wheeled her chair around, confronting Ann with the glossy sheet covered by long, printed columns with penciled corrections in the margins. "What is this doing still on my desk? Didn't you call Zenith Records to check on the spelling of those South African folk songs?"

"Gosh, I'm terribly sorry, I forgot! I can't do it now, Terry. I've really got to run to that interview, or I'll keep them waiting. Why can't Monica do it for you, now that we have a secretary again?"

Terry looked at Monica, suddenly aware of her presence. "Oh, I suppose she can, although I don't know, she's never done anything like this before."

"Oh, I'm sure I can do it, Teresa," Monica broke in, anxious to help Ann get out to her interview. "Just tell me whom I should ask for at Zenith."

"You're really missing the point, though, Ann," Terry continued, whisking off her straw sailor and throwing it on the desk. Her carefully shaped black hair lost its composure, revealing a multitude of tiny

curls. "This proof was marked rush. I asked you to check on the spelling last night and bring it right back to the Production Department. If you start holding up the printer at the very first stage, how do you think the magazine can ever reach the newsstands?" Her black eyes sparkled with anger.

Ann started to speak, then changed her mind.

"Oh, go on, go on." Terry waved her away impatiently. "No sense being late for that, too."

Ann walked out, slamming the door, and Monica picked up the phone to call Zenith. Will it be possible to get along with two such embattled personalities, she wondered as she dialed the number?

Monica looked at her watch and saw that it was almost five thirty. Ann had already left and Teresa, who had been typing steadily all afternoon, had pushed back her chair and was going over her reviews, penciling in changes as she read. A few minutes later, she began to gather together her belongings.

She came over to Monica's desk with a sheaf of papers. "First thing tomorrow morning, you can type this clean. Why don't you go home now? You've done enough for one day."

"Oh, I'll be getting ready in a few minutes," Monica answered. Terry looked to see if her hat looked

all right in the mirror on the closet door, then said good night and was gone.

I wonder what I should do, thought Monica. Willard hasn't said what time we're going out. Guess I'll start making myself presentable. Taking soap and a towel from her bottom desk drawer, she made her way to what most of the staff seemed to call the little girls' room.

Oh, dear, she complained to herself as she washed her face, when I get ready for a date with Pete, it takes me about an hour to dress. But all I have with me tonight is lipstick and powder, so I guess I'll be ready in two minutes. If only I'd remembered to buy a flower to pin to my dress! Oh well, at least I washed my hair last night, she finally thought, scrutinizing herself in the mirror once more.

Back in her office, Monica sat down near the window and started to page through a copy of *Variety*. Before long, Willard stuck his head in the door.

"My, aren't you the eager beaver," he said, smiling as he noted the newspaper on her lap. Then he added, "I guess the coast is clear by now. Everybody seems to be gone, so shall we be on our way?"

She felt much more comfortable with Pete, Monica thought as they drove down lower Fifth Avenue. Looking out of the taxi window, Willard was saying,

"Remember the little sidewalk café right there

where that new apartment house is? That would have been a nice place to sit on an evening like this." Then he laughed to himself and continued, "This part of town always makes me think of 'The Girls in their Summer Dresses.' "

"Oh, I know that story." Monica nodded delightedly, glad that she understood the reference. "I'd forgotten that it takes place here." I sound so anxious to impress him, she thought. Why can't I relax with him the way I do with people my own age? She leaned forward to get a closer look. Now they were passing through Washington Square and Monica caught sight of the men grouped around stone tables with built-in chessboards. A gang of children roller skated by, the rumble of their skates mingled with shouts and laughter, yet the old men remained completely undisturbed as they concentrated on their game.

The taxi came to a stop in MacDougal Street, in front of a green and yellow striped awning. At the table, Willard asked her what she would like to drink.

"Martinis all right?"

"Oh, no!" Monica said quickly. "I don't think I'll have anything to drink, if you don't mind. But you go ahead and have one."

"That's right! I forgot I was robbing the cradle," he said, laughing.

During dinner, Willard did most of the talking.

Monica sat fascinated as he described some of the manuscripts he had looked through that day, drawing on his wide knowledge of contemporary literature for comparisons. A casual remark about Southern authors led them to a discussion of spirituals and other folk music and gave Monica a chance to tell him with enthusiasm of her collection of recorded folk songs. She was thrilled when he suggested that, dinner over, they walk a few blocks to a small night club where they would be able to hear the sort of music they both liked so much.

Feeling confident and happy, she walked down a steep flight of stairs and into a smoky, crowded room. The black and white floor, tiled like a giant checkerboard, was all but covered by tiny tables and chairs, jammed one against the other. A dozen couples were dancing to the music of a melancholy-looking four-piece band. Monica noticed two people in evening clothes and a girl in a dirndl skirt and ballet slippers. Willard was right, she thought. Anything goes in here. I needn't have worried about what to wear.

They squirmed into their chairs, careful not to jostle the couples at the adjoining tables that just about fenced them in. Intrigued, Monica stared at the walls where pastel visions of strangely garbed people flying through the air intermingled with caricatures of show business personalities.

The waiter came over, a big smile ready for Wil-

lard. "Haven't seen you around in weeks," he said, putting his hand on his customer's shoulder. "Where have you been?" The two talked for a few minutes, and Monica turned her attention to the music.

"They play everything the same way," she said to Willard. "Mambos, jazz, it all sounds sort of slow and bluesy, don't you think?"

He nodded. "No chance for wild jitterbugging here, Monica. There wouldn't be room. And besides, I don't know how."

Don't know how to jitterbug, she wondered, or how to dance at all?

But he did ask her to dance, although most of her crowd wouldn't have honored it with that name.

"I'm about as graceful as a bear," he apologized, and Monica had to smile, remembering that Enid had once described him as just that, in a most unflattering way. I guess not everyone can be as good a dancer as Pete, she thought as they walked back to their table. But Willard, on the other hand, seemed pleased with himself.

"You know, I'm really having a good time," he said, looking at her approvingly. "Believe it or not, I've always made it a rule not to go out with anyone from the office. I'm glad you decided to stick with the job and so gave me a chance to ask you—although why you agreed to go out with me, after all the things

you must have heard about my sour disposition, I'll never know."

Monica giggled mischievously. "Oh, I had to find out for myself, didn't I?" Then, without stopping to think, she blurted out what had been on her mind all evening long. "How did you ever get such a reputation for yourself? You're not really half as bad as the rest of the staff thinks you are!"

As soon as the words were out, she felt herself blushing. She searched for something to say that would smooth over her blunder.

But Willard was laughing. "They really think I'm a hermit, don't they? And I suppose I deserve it, the way I act in the office. But you know, it's pretty difficult, being the only single guy in an office full of women."

Just then an announcer stepped before the microphone, introducing the star of the evening.

"Tune in later to hear what makes Willard tick," he whispered close to her ear, and then their eyes followed the spotlight as it landed on a tall, thin man in a maroon corduroy jacket.

Caressing a guitar with long, bony fingers, he began to describe his music in a slow, Southern voice. Monica sat entranced, watching his skillful hands, moved by the sad strains of an English madrigal. A lively ballad of the Smoky Mountains followed, and Monica turned to see the couple at the neighboring

table gaily tapping their feet. To the right, a girl's ponytail bounced in time to the music. Songs of many moods, from many different countries, followed each other until a final, enthusiastic burst of applause signaled the end of the performance.

Monica studied her Coke, wondering how to remind her escort that her parents expected her home early. Embarrassed, she pointed out that it was a week day night, and that, although she had enjoyed their celebration enormously, she would have to get home. A look of amusement briefly crossed Willard's face, as, without a word, he summoned the waiter. Holding Monica's chair while she got up from the table, he joshed her, "Come on, baby. Let's get you back to Mommy and Daddy."

It's been a wonderful evening, Monica reassured herself as they waited for a taxi, even if he does treat me like a kid sister sometimes. He's tall and his face is so determined, she thought, watching him in the half light, but he's vulnerable, too—he seems to be afraid to go out to people.

And I may be a kid, but at least I wasn't afraid to make friends with him.

CHAPTER EIGHT

As in a dream, Monica heard the alarm clock ring. A lazy arm reached out from under the sheets to turn it off, then fell back across the pillow. A million years later, she felt her mother's hand on her shoulder, shaking her into awakeness.

"Monica, the alarm clock rang fifteen minutes ago! Hurry up and take your shower, or you'll be late!"

Monica rubbed her eyes, then looked at the clock.

"Nine o'clock?" she said wonderingly. "Oh Mommy, it's Saturday, I don't want to get up yet! Let me sleep a little while longer!"

Her mother held out a hand. "Come on, dear. You have to give yourself an hour to get to class, otherwise you'll run out without having breakfast."

Monica took her mother's outstretched hand and pulled herself out of bed. Eyes still closed, she padded into the bathroom and fumbled for her shower cap. Thank goodness for hot water, she thought, beginning to feel alive. Oh, if I could only sleep late, at least on Saturdays! It would have been better to go to class three nights a week than to get up early on week ends, she mused. Or would it? She remembered the hurried dinners and the dash up to Columbia of the past two weeks. Well, Miss Cole, she admonished herself, who thought it would be such a snap to combine college and a career?

Sitting in the bus on the way to school, she noticed that the two boys opposite her were also carrying books with the blue and white seals of Columbia University. A lively discussion of college football was taking place between them. To Monica, who had thought of her school as merely another group of office buildings where people studied instead of worked, it seemed strange to hear talk of campus spirit. I suppose if I made the time to get to know a few people in my classes, she told herself, I'd feel more like a college coed. The bus stopped at one hundred and sixteenth Street and Monica jumped off, walking quickly past the pillars and up the steps to the campus.

In the bright sunshine, the autumn foliage contrasted sharply with the gray buildings. She stopped

to admire a bed of cheery yellow chrysanthemums. It was only her second Saturday of classes since the term had begun, and suddenly she felt that it would really be good to see Columbia in the daytime once a week. In the evenings, when the cold white lights were on in the classrooms, and all you could see through the windows was blackness, the rooms were filled with a heavy atmosphere of concentration. It was easy then to forget that school meant fun as well as learning. Yet this morning things looked more leisurely. Monica wished she could join the students sunning themselves on steps and benches, but she hadn't allowed enough time and, after one look at her watch, she quickened her pace toward the journalism building where English classes were held.

The class over, she was in no hurry to get home. She strolled into the bookstore, to see whether her history textbook had come in. A blue and white felt lion with a large "C" on his back suddenly seemed to smile at her from a shelf. Now Willard would really think me a baby, she said to herself, as she asked a salesgirl for the price. Yet she bought him with conviction, picturing him propped up with a pillow on her bed.

"I'd like one of those lions, too," said a voice next to her, and its owner added shyly to the salesgirl, "it's for my children. I think they'd like it."

Monica turned. "Oh, you're in my astronomy class," she said to a tall woman in her thirties.

"Yes, I guess that's right," the woman answered, in a voice that sounded to Monica slightly European. "But how you have time to notice who's in your class, I don't know. It seems to me I've done nothing but hurry to school, try to learn something and then rush off again, without looking left or right."

Monica nodded in understanding and introduced herself. She found that her older classmate was a Mrs. Muller. As the pair walked together out of the store, a boy in a freshman cap handed them a mimeographed announcement of a freshman open house.

Mrs. Muller laughed. "That's all my children would have to hear," she said good-naturedly. "They think it funny enough that their mother is going to school."

She went on to explain that she had married shortly after arriving from Austria, several years before, and only now, with all three of her children in school, had she found time to complete her own education. The two chatted for a while, then said good-bye as Monica's bus pulled up. Gratefully, Monica thought: Well, that's a beginning. At least now I have someone to sit next to in one of my classes. And something told her that the people she'd meet here would be a lot more colorful than the average college freshman could ever be.

CHAPTER NINE

MONICA GOT to work early one morning, several weeks later, hoping for a few free minutes to review her astronomy notes before Ann and Teresa arrived at the office. She had a quiz coming up that evening, the first of the term, and she was really concerned. She read her notes over quickly, then saw that no one had as yet come in. Looks like Ann is late again, she thought, going back to a page that had puzzled her.

When the door opened, Monica looked up with a smile of welcome for Ann, but Terry had arrived before her assistant. Her good morning to Monica quickly turned into a frown when she noticed Ann's empty desk. She took off her white gloves, then im-

patiently picked up a proof from the clutter of mail and photographs on her assistant's desk. She brought the proof over to Monica.

"How about it, Monica? Would you feel up to correcting this proof of Ann's? I'd like to get it back to Production as soon as possible, and there's quite a bit of cutting to do—at least twenty lines. Ann must have overwritten again; she never pays much attention to what the Art Department specifies in the layout. Or maybe we were heavy on advertising this month."

Monica looked puzzled. "Does our space depend on the amount of advertising?" she asked. "Gosh, there's so much I don't know about the running of a magazine!"

"Well, the center section of the magazine isn't affected," Teresa replied, perching on the edge of Monica's desk, "but the articles in the front and back of the book, which have ads on the same page, very frequently do have to be tailored to the amount of advertising." She headed back toward her own desk. "I wouldn't worry so much about learning, if I were you," she added. "The thing to remember is to do your own job as well as possible—unlike our tardy colleague."

Monica hated the feeling of being caught in the middle. Wishing Terry didn't find it necessary to comment unfavorably on Ann to her, she eagerly

turned to the job on her desk. How do you cut twenty lines out of someone else's writing, she wondered, determined not to ask Teresa for help? How do you know what's important and what isn't? I would hate to have anyone tinker with my writing, after I've more or less poured my heart into it. She concentrated on her work, anxious to get it finished before Ann's arrival and so avoid an embarrassing situation. But fitting the words to the required count of each line was more time-consuming than she had anticipated, and she was only halfway through when Ann dashed in, all set to recite her apology.

"I was out late last night, Terry," she blurted, "and when the alarm rang this morning, I just simply didn't hear it. I'm really sorry."

Teresa looked bored. "Well, you're not so indispensable. Monica is taking care of your proof. I asked her to. It came in last night, just after you left in such a hurry, and I couldn't let it sit around all morning."

Her tone was sarcastic, and Monica quickly broke in, anxious to smooth things over. "Here it is, Ann. Would you like to finish cutting it?"

"No," Terry ordered sharply. "You just go on with it, Monica. I'm sure Ann has plenty of other things to catch up on."

Ann shrugged her shoulders. "That's fine with me. *I* don't think of all my writing as deathless prose."

There's no mistaking the emphasis on the word "I," Monica thought unhappily. Why don't they stop making digs at each other? She tried hard to concentrate on the proof. True, I've been anxious to do more responsible work, she mused, but I didn't think it would be at the expense of someone else.

Noontime came and she still hadn't finished the proof. Her lunch with Enid was shorter than usual—just a quick sandwich at the drug store—so that she could do a little more work in preparation for her astronomy quiz. And then she had to finish the proof, which by now was covered with erasures and penciled-in changes.

At five-thirty Monica left the office, without even a look at her shiny nose, busily reciting to herself the names of the various constellations. She had dinner with the astronomy book next to her, much to her mother's disapproval, and she read all the way up to Columbia in the bus. By the time she entered the classroom, she felt fairly confident that the quiz would go well. I have to do well, she thought determinedly. I have to show them that I didn't make the wrong decision.

She sat in the first empty seat she could find, then noticed a hand waving at her. Mrs. Muller was smiling from across the room. Monica, about to pick up her books and move over to sit next to her new friend, noticed that both neighboring seats were occupied,

so she gestured instead that she would see her later. Then she turned toward the blackboard, on which the instructor was about to write the opening question.

The quiz over, Monica felt relieved. I didn't really have to worry, she thought. If they get no harder than this during the course of the term, I'll be doing fine. She settled back, ready to listen to the lecture for the evening, but the instructor announced that he hated to waste such a clear night in the classroom, and that they would all go up to the observatory. Monica made her way across the large auditorium toward Mrs. Muller, who was still seated, engrossed in a discussion of the quiz with the man in the next seat. Unnoticed, Monica listened for a few moments, watching the rest of the class as they made their way toward the elevators in the hall. When the room was almost empty, Mrs. Muller and her neighbor rose to go. Monica saw that he was a boy of medium height, probably in his early twenties, with dark brown hair and eyes.

Mrs. Muller started to introduce them. "Monica Cole, may I present Mr. ——" She hesitated.

"Lawrence Simon," he supplied, smiling, "and I think we'd better hurry, or we'll miss the last elevator to the moon."

As he ushered the other two into the hall, Monica

thought how odd that such a beautiful, deep voice should be housed in so average-looking a person.

When the three ducked their heads under the low doorway that led out to the roof, Monica took a deep breath of the chilly night air. The heavens had always seemed extremely remote to her, but up on that high roof the stars appeared almost within reach, and she was glad that some of the secrets of the heavens would perhaps be solved for her. Up ahead, at the entrance to the dome, Lawrence Simon was holding the metal door open, so she hurried inside. The green roof, partially open, revealed a wedge of sky. The instructor was looking through one of the enormous telescopes, pointing out Saturn and the ring around it, rarely visible even on such a high-powered instrument.

"This part of it I really love," said Monica as they walked out of the building when class was over. "Seeing the stars and feeling the sky all around you. It's when it comes to things like measuring ergs and quantum theories that I get panicky."

Larry looked at her in mock wonder. "Dig those crazy words! Seriously, though, I'm majoring in chemical engineering, so if either of you get into trouble with formulae or definitions, I'll be glad to offer my help—for whatever that's worth!"

"I've had enough of astronomy for one night," Mrs. Muller complained. "My head is swimming, and

I'm half frozen from standing in that cold observatory. Whatever will we do in the winter? How about a cup of coffee to warm us up?"

In the drug store, Monica and her new friends swapped vital statistics. Larry explained that he was making up for time lost doing his stint in Korea by holding down a job in a textile plant during the day and attending Columbia in the evenings.

"It's only my third year," he continued, "but it feels as if I've been at it forever."

Hearing his sigh, Monica felt like joining in. So far, it's been fun, she thought, but will it continue to be, year after year? Will I really have the gumption to see this thing through?

CHAPTER TEN

A FEW WEEKS later, Monica was alone in the office, working quietly at her desk. Teresa had taken a batch of records home the night before, announcing that she planned to spend the next day undisturbed in her apartment, listening to new releases and writing her reviews. Ann was out to lunch. There wasn't much for Monica to attend to, and she wished Ann would hurry back and assign her some work so that she could get started early and leave the office on time.

Sue was home from college for the week end and Monica couldn't wait to see her. There was so much she wanted to hear about life on campus, about the sorority Sue had pledged, the dances and football

games. She had found herself hoping, whenever a letter from Peter arrived, that it would contain an invitation to a college week end. But so far, no bid. She was afraid she might have discouraged him by making too much of Saturday classes and her busy daily schedule.

Ann came in, hesitating in the doorway for a moment.

"Well, what did you have for lunch, an elephant? It's after three, you know," Monica growled.

"Lunch? Oh, no. I've been in with Mrs. Duncan." Ann sat down at her desk, opening up one drawer at a time. She took out a jar of cold cream, several bottles of nail polish, a comb and brush and an assortment of lipsticks. Next came a little wooden doll, dressed in what had once been a pristine white bridal gown.

"What on earth are you doing?" Monica was getting impatient. "Have you got that story for me to type? I'd like to get started on it now, so I can leave on the dot of five-thirty. Okay?"

Ann swiveled around and around in her chair, arms outstretched. "You can leave right now, as far as I'm concerned. That's what I'm going to do. You'll never have to worry about typing for me any more. I," she continued, stopping her gyrations and bowing ceremoniously, "have just been fired!"

"Oh, Ann, not really! That's just awful. What will you do? What will Terry say?"

Ann chortled loudly. "What will Terry say? Look, little Red Riding Hood, who do you think told Duncan on me? And don't look so shocked. Terry and I just never got along, everybody knew that. For that matter, Terry can't stand anyone who wants to be anything more than a filing clerk. You'll find that out, too, I bet!"

"I knew you two had your disagreements, but it's hard to believe she would go that far!"

Ann swiveled back to face her own desk. "Oh, well, don't worry about me. I'd really had enough of her bossiness, anyway. Besides, I heard of an interesting opening on another magazine just last week. What I'm really concerned about is this little dingy lady," she said, picking up the wooden doll and coming over to Monica. She told her the legend of the doll, a good luck charm which was passed on from one staff member to another, once the current owner married.

"I'm still single but I guess I can't take her with me. She's got to stay within the halls of *Living Today*. And there's no use leaving her with Teresa. Anyone with her disposition will never get married, with or without good luck charms. So I guess you're the winner, child though you are."

Monica took the charm, blowing the dust off her billowy skirt and propping her on top of *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*. "She and I both have a great

deal of knowledge to pick up before we're ready for the big day! Thanks a lot for leaving her with me, though. I'll really miss you, Ann," she said, squeezing her companion's hand.

Together, they packed Ann's belongings—odd gloves, a book of poems, a velvet rose, even a toothbrush, all went tumbling into a large cardboard box. Monica was made heir to an old umbrella.

"Not so much for the rain, but to defend yourself against that Conti girl," Ann said with a gleam in her eyes. She took off to say good-bye to her friends on the staff.

As Ann went out, the mail came in, keeping Monica busy at answering letters for the rest of the afternoon. One reader requested the address of a handsome movie star, another wrote to congratulate Teresa on a recent article. It was only as she was combing her hair to go home that Monica had time to wonder what Monday would be like without Ann in the office. What would Terry say? And then she asked herself, had Terry purposely stayed home to avoid the unpleasantness?

By the time Monica reached home, all kinds of questions had formed in her mind, the largest of all being who would take Ann's place.

All week end long, she tried to submerge a thought that kept pushing its way to the surface. Even while Sue gave a sidesplitting description of sorority rush-

ings and gushed over a devastating senior she had met, Monica couldn't help thinking that maybe she herself would be Ann's successor. In class on Saturday morning, as she doodled her name on her composition notes, she found herself writing *Monica Cole, Assistant Entertainment Editor.*

Finally, Mr. Cole put Monica's thoughts into words. The family was on the way to a neighborhood movie Saturday night when he suddenly turned to his eldest daughter and asked:

"I know you haven't been at the magazine long, but do you think there's a chance of your getting Ann's job?"

Monica answered stoutly, "Oh, that's out of the question, Dad. I've been in the department less than two months, and I've never even been out on an interview. I wouldn't know where to begin to evaluate a film or a piece of music. And I'm much too young, besides. But thanks for offering me the job, anyway." She laughed.

Yet knowing all this, she couldn't bury the hope of a promotion. Bored with the movie—she had spent too many dateless Saturday nights since Peter had gone away—she began to toy with a new idea. Terry wasn't really happy to have a full-fledged, well-trained assistant, she said to herself. Maybe she would rather have someone less experienced, who wouldn't be so much competition. So why not Monica?

Monday, she thought, would be a day full of events. Yet the day came and went without any indication of who would be the new assistant. Monica and Teresa both worked steadily, with never a word between them as to Ann's dismissal. On Tuesday it occurred to Monica that Terry had shown no signs of interviewing job applicants. Maybe Personnel or Mrs. Duncan handle these things, she guessed. On the other hand, perhaps they were considering someone on the staff. But whom? She decided to take it as a happy sign that no one was being interviewed from the outside.

On Wednesday morning, as Monica was getting settled at her desk, the door was flung open and Enid stood there, crying "Surprise!"

Monica got up and tried to look out into the hall, to see what the surprise might be. But Enid came past her, straight over to the closet, took off her coat and hung it up. She beamed into the mirror for a moment, patting her curly red hair into place. When she turned she said,

"It's me. I'm the surprise. I've come home to Entertainment!"

Monica looked quite stunned. "You mean Ann's job . . ."

"Uh-huh. I guess Mrs. Duncan knew a year ago, when I had your job, that I would have loved being

the Assistant Ed. And now that Ann is gone, she offered the job to me. Isn't that great? We'll have a ball, sharing the same office, not just a lunch table!"

"Why, of course, it'll be lots of fun." Monica tried to convince herself. "I just never thought of it. I thought you were all settled writing about belts and gloves. Anyway, welcome home. Terry knows, I suppose. Funny she didn't tell me."

"Oh, that Terry is an odd bird. But I don't mind her . . . she has a lot to teach, you know, if she only would. Yes, she knows I've been elected. Mrs. Duncan had us both in her office yesterday."

Without bringing herself to say much more, Monica made a great show of typing an article she had started the day before. . . . I didn't really think for a moment, she assured herself, that I was going to get the job. Enid has wanted and deserved it for such a long time. Besides, she's my best friend here, and it's lucky for me I'm going to be able to share an office with her! Determinedly she forced her fingers to fly over the keys, unwilling to think about her disappointment any longer.

Enid had gone on an errand when Teresa came in from her screening.

"I didn't know that Enid was going to take Ann's job," Monica started in a small voice.

"Oh, well," Terry shrugged, "I hadn't really been consulted myself. Enid's a good worker, though, and

a nice gal. She seems to have picked up a lot of writing know-how over in Fashion, so I guess we'll do all right. I still think that two really topnotch secretaries would be much more help to me, but Liz Duncan likes to encourage budding geniuses under her roof. Says it's good for morale."

Monica's morale was as low as could be, however. She did her work quietly, unable to share Enid's joy, feeling guilty because of her resentment. In the afternoon, while Terry was at an editors' conference, Enid came over to Monica's desk.

"Hey, what's eating you, kid? Are you always like this in the office? Why don't you tell Granny all about it."

"There's really nothing to tell," Monica assured her friend. "And I am *not* always like this. Guess I've just been studying too hard."

"You weren't by any chance disappointed that you didn't get Ann's job, were you?"

Monica started to shake her head, then felt tears stinging her eyes. She quickly looked down at some papers on her desk. Enid patted her head gently.

"Oh, Mo, I told you when we first had lunch together that it takes a long time to break through. Look at me—this is my fourth year at *Living Today*. And I'm a good seven years older than you are. I had no idea that you had hoped to get the job!"

"Oh, I know it was crazy to let myself think along

those lines." Monica took a tissue from her purse and blew her nose forcefully. "When they didn't interview anyone for the position, I guess I must have let myself be carried away. I really am glad that you're the one to get it, honestly I am!"

"Okay, then, cheer up, and just wait and see—it won't take you forever! And at least I'll be here to help you learn the ropes!"

Monica suddenly realized how utterly self-centered she had been. She should have thought of her more experienced friend immediately as the inevitable replacement for this opening. Enid had told her, long ago, that Entertainment was her first love and, besides, she, Monica, had a great deal more to learn before she could really qualify. But learn she would—especially with such a loyal friend to help her.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WITHIN THE next few weeks, Enid stayed true to her word and Monica felt like a rookie in training. With each step of the daily routine, Enid explained her course of action, adding to Monica's responsibilities as her know-how increased.

First thing every morning, Monica read the entertainment sections in all the New York newspapers, looking for items that might develop into articles for their department. She scanned the celebrity newsletter, which arrived each day, containing particulars on all the stars coming to town, and marked interesting possibilities.

She began to understand the highly involved show business world, learning exactly who stood behind

each famous name: the motion picture publicity man, the recording studio contact, the TV and radio network press departments and, finally, the personal manager and publicity agent, all of whom contributed to the makings of a star. Monica never ceased to wonder how so many people could play a part in arranging for interviews and supplying the writers with the necessary background material.

She soon found herself in the realm of the "pros," laying foundations for articles which would become main features in the magazine—on first-name terms with the fast-talking men and women behind the scenes in the entertainment world. She had no sooner learned that Mr. and Miss were obsolete forms of address, when she had to get used to hearing herself called "sweetie" and "darling" more often than Monica. It made her feel more and more a part of this complicated machinery, even though she realized that the main reason for all the friendliness was the large amount of publicity a magazine could give show business personalities.

One morning, just as Monica was sitting down to type Teresa's coverage of a new TV show, Enid suddenly asked, "How about coming with me when I interview Maria Filippi? She's just about your age, and you can probably help me. I've been reading her biography for the past half-hour and I can't seem to

come up with enough provocative questions to ask her."

"Oh, Enid! I wish I could—I've always wanted to see how an interview works," Monica said excitedly. "But I have this long piece to type and Terry said she'd have some dictation for me this afternoon when she gets back. I don't see how I could go."

"Well, look. It won't take us more than just a slightly extended lunch hour. If you're ever going to learn how to write personality stories, you ought to do a lot of observing first. I'm sure you can fit in your typing later on. Even if it means staying a few minutes after hours, I think it's worth it for you."

A few minutes late, Monica thought! She never left on time any more, now that Enid had taken her under her wing! This would make it the second time this week that she had gone to school without any dinner. But aloud she said,

"Okay, sold! Is it all right if I don't have a hat?"

"Well . . . we're going to the Plaza . . ." Enid hesitated. "You really should wear one. Why don't you ask one of the fashion gals to lend you a hat? They're working on spring issues, but you might find something that isn't white piqué."

Monica immediately started off to see what Fashion had to offer, but Enid stopped her at the door.

"You aren't taking Italian in school now by any chance, are you? This Filippi girl is just off the plane

from Rome, and I'm sure she doesn't speak much English. She's probably planning to learn it when she gets to Hollywood."

"No, I'm sorry. I won't be taking languages until next year," Monica called, dashing out, eager to get underway.

The tiny, perky red hat she had found underneath a pile of Easter straws made Monica feel very cosmopolitan as she followed Enid up the wide stairs of the Plaza Hotel and into the hushed lobby. On their way to the desk, they passed the Palm Room, decked with ferns and potted trees, where dignified, white-haired ladies and gentlemen were lunching solemnly. The stiff-necked clerk eyed them coolly as Enid asked for the number of Miss Filippi's suite.

In a precise voice with a British accent he asked, "What did you say your name was?"

Monica basked in Enid's reply. "Mrs. Gold and Miss Cole of *Living Today* magazine."

He nodded, picked up the telephone and asked for the room, so acknowledging for the first time that the actress was registered at all.

As the elevator doors opened on to the Oriental carpets of the seventh floor, Monica clutched Enid's arm.

"Oh, goodness! You forgot to take a notebook!"

"No, I didn't." Enid smiled. "That's one of the reasons why you're here—to learn how to take notes

mentally. It's all concentration, old girl. Makes the interview run much more smoothly. You can't expect a person to talk frankly and easily while you're scribbling away under her very nose."

Monica looked impressed and Enid added, "Oh, it's not really so hard. I usually dash right back to the office and jot down the salient points before I forget them."

The door to the suite opened before they had a chance to knock. A short, stout woman put her arm around Enid's shoulders and drew her into the room, all the while rambling on about ordering lunch.

"I thought we'd have something sent up to the suite and have a nice, cozy chat," she purred.

From the next room came a young, high-pitched voice, with a strong European accent. "Rhoda, shall I put on my black suit now, or will we come back here before the cocktail party?"

"Just put on your house coat, dear. We're having lunch right in the room," replied Miss Benedict. Then she explained to Enid that Maria had been out late at a press preview the night before and was just now getting dressed.

"Oh well, we're in no hurry," replied Enid; then she added, "Goodness, Rhoda, I haven't even introduced my assistant, Monica Cole. You've talked to her on the phone so often that I had forgotten you two hadn't met."

Monica shook hands with the plump woman, pleased at being referred to as Enid's assistant. Then the door opened, and a slim, wistful-looking girl with enormous brown eyes and long brown hair came out, dressed in a plaid, man-tailored robe. Introductions were made, lunch was ordered over the phone, then the four of them sat down on striped satin chairs and Enid, enunciating carefully to help Maria understand, began drawing her out about the life of an actress in Rome. Throughout the meal, as the conversation between Enid and the young star continued, Monica was amazed at the quantity of food that such a thin person managed to put away. Miss Benedict, too, seemed to notice, and she kept offering second helpings to Enid and Monica, as though to keep Maria away from it. She also attempted to steer the conversation toward Hollywood and Maria's future films and away from the Shakespearean roles that her charge seemed so anxious to discuss.

Shyly, Monica asked where she had learned to speak English so well, and Maria's reply led them to a rewarding description of her schooling. It seemed to Monica that she was almost relieved to be discussing something other than movies or her glamourous new surroundings. Suddenly it was three o'clock, and Miss Benedict was rushing Maria and explaining that they had a date with a photographer who was to shoot her in front of the Metropolitan Museum.

In the taxi cab, on the way back to the office, Monica told Enid how she admired the ease with which she had carried off the interview.

"I got the feeling you had known her for a long time and were just having a friendly conversation. How do you keep from being awed by all these celebrities?"

Enid smiled. "This girl certainly didn't seem like anyone to be awed by. I felt rather sorry for her, being shepherded around all over a strange country. But anyway, the thing to remember is that even the very famous ones are interested in your writing a good story about them. You're doing them a service, as well as vice versa. The way to really get them to talk is to learn enough about their backgrounds before you start, so you'll know what subjects interest them and how to draw them out."

She makes it sound so easy, Monica thought. I wonder how scared I'll be if I ever get a chance to go out on a story of my own!

Back at the office, Enid immediately sat down at her typewriter and made rough notes on the interview. Monica went back to typing Terry's article, relieved to see that their boss had not as yet come in. When Teresa appeared, half an hour later, Enid told her about the interview. She mentioned having brought Monica along, then added:

"You know, she did very well. She asked a good

question, which made Maria Filippi loosen up a lot. She's really learning fast," she said, her voice full of pride. Monica watched Terry's face, noting that she was obviously not as enthusiastic as Enid.

The editor shrugged her shoulders. "I can't say I understand this passion of yours for teaching Monica all kinds of things she doesn't need to know. All I want is a good secretary, which I grant Monica is, otherwise I would really raise the roof about her taking on so many extras. Didn't it occur to you that you were leaving the office uncovered for hours? Supposing Mrs. Duncan had called?"

Enid didn't answer, and Teresa turned to her work, as though in an effort to control her temper. A few minutes later a new thought struck her.

"Did Rhoda Benedict know you were bringing someone else along? I bet you didn't even think of checking with her! She must think we're running a girls' school here, bringing a pal along for company!"

"Oh, Terry!" Enid's voice was soothing. "Don't work yourself up into a tizzy! Rhoda didn't mind, and I know Maria Filippi was happy to have someone her own age along. She seemed rather lost in New York. And you know Monica always makes sure that she has your work finished before she does anything for me or herself."

The phone rang. Monica sang out pleasantly, giv-

ing no indication of the worry she felt, "Entertainment Department!"

"It's for you, Terry," she said, forgetting to ask who was calling.

"Well, who is it?" Terry whispered, impatiently.

When Monica gave her the gentleman's name, Terry picked up the phone eagerly, and it occurred to Monica that it was the first time Terry had ever received a personal call from a man at the office.

"I can't, John," she heard Terry say. "I'd love to, but I'm just swamped with work. I have a deadline to meet tomorrow, and if I don't start writing the piece tonight, I never will."

After that the conversation was brief, and Terry's humor blacker than ever. Monica pictured herself, years from now, turning Peter down the same way. His hair would be graying at the temples, and she would be wearing a chic black hat and would have no time to go bowling. Now that's silly, she answered herself firmly. He certainly isn't going to wait around that long. He hasn't even asked me up for the week end.

Toward the end of the afternoon Terry piled her work into a neat "Lady Executive" brief case and announced that she found it easier to concentrate at home, and could be reached there. As soon as the door was closed behind her, Monica quickly turned to Enid.

"Oh, Enid, do you think we're in trouble? I'm afraid she's going to have us fired, too! She was really angry about your taking me with you!"

"Don't be silly, Mo. This isn't a repeat of Ann's troubles." Enid sounded completely confident. "Ann really had it coming to her, you know. Besides taking all kinds of liberties for over two years, she never did her work, and that's what really riled Terry. The boss lady has always had her nose to the grindstone, and Ann was a real playgirl, so the two of them didn't hit it off from the word go. But she can't accuse us of neglecting our work, so I'm sure today's incident will be forgotten."

Monica shook her head thoughtfully. "I don't know how you kept your temper so well. If the phone hadn't rung, I would probably have blown my top."

"Oh, I guess I've known Teresa Conti a long time, and I've learned what makes her tick. It's hard to get mad at someone, once you've found out what's behind their actions."

"What is she really like, anyway?" Monica wanted to know. "She's been so cold to me ever since I came into the department—not rude, you know, just completely disinterested."

"I don't guess she's really warm to anyone. No one around the office, anyway. What I do know is that she comes from a very poor family of ten brothers

and sisters. Her parents worked hard for years before they could afford to buy the fruit and vegetable store on Ninth Avenue that she's so self-conscious about." Enid continued, "I understand there was just enough money to put the boys through high school, so the girls had to get whatever education they wanted on their own. And now that she has prestige—and you know, she's really good at her job, and it's recognized in the field," Enid shook her finger at Monica, for added emphasis, "she doesn't seem to be able to relax. I suppose she must always be afraid that someone will take her position away from her."

Monica had been listening intently, ashamed of how little thought she ever gave to other people's inner drives. She voiced her feelings, wondering why Enid was so much more aware.

"Well, I don't mean to sound like your grandmother, but I don't know how aware I was at seventeen, either. One reason I've tried to figure out our boss is because she's the very opposite of me. It's real easy for me to be relaxed about my job, you know. I'm married, and I love my husband, and that's what's important to me, really. I do enjoy the magazine, and I'm anxious to do well, but my happiness doesn't depend on it. And that makes a big difference in a person's attitude toward possible competition!"

A thousand new thoughts crowded in Monica's mind. She would have loved to ask more questions,

to find how Enid had reached this well-balanced state of mind, but beside her sat the typewriter, and in it was Terry's manuscript, only half finished. And, as Enid often pointed out, efficiency was the one thing above all that their editor prized! As it is, she thought grimly, I'll have to sit through classes on an empty stomach. I'll never have time to go home for supper, or to finish that chapter on the War of the Roses.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SEVERAL STUDENTS were gathering around the English instructor. As Monica walked by, she lingered on the fringe of the group, wondering whether she too should discuss her midterm paper with him. Oh, what for, she told herself angrily. I flunked, so what can he tell me? She came out into the bright winter sunshine, her gloomy thoughts reflected in her frowning face, unhappiness showing with each slow step she took. At the foot of the stairs to the journalism building, Monica caught sight of Lawrence Simon, engrossed in a conversation with two other men. I'm really in no mood for small talk, she thought, hoping to pass by unnoticed. But Larry smiled and waved and, in a moment, had left his com-

panions to catch up with her as she walked toward Broadway.

"Hi, wait up," he called. "Why so grim on such a beautiful day?"

"*Grrrr,*" she shuddered, "it's not a beautiful day as far as I'm concerned. I just flunked my English midterm!"

"English? You? I thought you told me you're in the magazine business."

"Well, you don't have to rub it in, do you?"

"No, of course not, I certainly didn't mean anything of the sort. Come on, cheer up! Want to tell Uncle Larry all about it?"

"No, thanks! Let's just change the subject. And what are you doing on this so-called beautiful day?"

"I have to go up to the Cloisters and do some looking around for my art survey class. You wouldn't consider coming along, would you? We could have some lunch up there."

Monica started to shake her head but found herself suddenly agreeable to his idea. Anything was better than being alone right now, she decided. They stopped at a drug store and Monica phoned her mother, to explain that she wouldn't be home for lunch. She determined to put off telling her parents the results of the examination until she had grown more used to the idea.

In half an hour, the two found themselves in Fort

Tryon Park. Once they had climbed to the top of the hill where the Cloisters stood, Monica had begun to feel her spirits lifting. The building housed a collection of medieval art. Now, as Monica looked out over the panorama that unfolded before her, she thought that the nuns or friars who had inhabited the Spanish cloister on which the museum was patterned could not have had a more beautiful view. The sky and the Hudson were sapphire blue, and the George Washington Bridge spanned the brown cliffs on either side of the river like a giant spider web, its airy grace belying the strength of steel.

Monica and Larry wandered through the high-ceilinged corridors of the Cloisters, admiring huge medieval tapestries and carved wooden statues. They walked through the herb garden, where the museum's caretakers grew exotic herbs and spices that were used in the days of love potions and other witchcraft.

After lunching at the cafeteria in the park, they sat on a stone bench, shielded from the wind by a tall cliff behind them. A group of children played hopscotch nearby, and as they spoke, Monica followed the progress of the game, silently rooting for a pigtailed, freckle-faced youngster who reminded her of Mary. Almost as though he had read her thoughts, Larry broke in,

"I think that guy's going to win. He looks just like my young brother, a great hopscotch champ."

He pointed to a brown-haired little boy, with a severe crew cut.

"Oh, he couldn't! I was just thinking that the girl with the red hat resembles my sister, and I want her to win. I didn't know you had a brother," Monica continued, "in fact, I don't really know anything about your family. Do you live with them?"

Larry then explained that his parents were no longer living, and that his brother Ned lived with his married sister in Connecticut, where he often visited them week ends. Monica then told him about her family, and they both laughed over Mary's latest attempts to make a perfume which Margot had commissioned for a high-school dance.

"I'm glad to see you can still laugh," Larry said, taking a good look at her. "Flunking a midterm isn't the end of the world, you know. Although I can see where failing an English exam would be a big blow to you."

Monica looked up, surprised that he had reopened this sore subject. "Well, I have no trouble with my themes, in fact I've done rather well, but I just haven't had time to study grammar, and that's what the test was all about."

"Well, I'm sure you'll make up for it in no time," he said, sensing she was on the defensive—that grades meant as much to her as they did to him. "It is hard to study when you're tired from the office. But I got

used to it—I think, once you've finished the first year, you're over the hump."

Monica then found herself telling Larry about her job, and the people she worked with. Although her marks had been poor, she couldn't help letting a note of pride come through in describing the new responsibilities she was gradually being allowed to take on at the magazine.

"Enid, that's the girl I work under, even let me do some of this month's crop of record reviews! Of course, they still appeared under her by-line, but she made sure our Editor-in-Chief knew who wrote them, and she said Mrs. Duncan had been quite pleased."

Larry in turn told her about the progress he had been making at the textile plant. He suspected he was on to a new way of making dyes which had his superiors interested, too.

They talked on about school and careers, and as they walked slowly toward their bus, Larry said,

"Between school and the factory and visiting Julie and Ned on week ends, time for dating becomes a real luxury for me, so I'm awfully glad we had this chance to be together for a while. Come to think of it, we never have really talked to each other without Frieda Muller being along, have we?"

They boarded the bus together, but at Ninety-sixth Street Monica rang the buzzer, insisting that Larry

didn't need to get off with her and walk with her to her home.

"You have another seventy blocks to go before you get off this pokey bus," she said, waving goodbye. "You might just as well stay on."

But to herself, she said: I'm really dreading telling Mom and Dad the results of the exam. And having a stranger around while I break the news would just make it harder!

Monica opened the door to her apartment and uttered a weak "Hi!" Margot and Mary were sprawled on the living room floor, reading magazines, and they didn't even look up when she came in, so Monica followed her nose to the kitchen, where her mother was starting the evening's dinner. Mr. Cole was sitting at the kitchen table, reading the paper.

"Hi, honey, did you have a nice date? Who was the boy?" said Mrs. Cole, stirring the soup.

Monica quickly told them about Larry, anxious to get down to the point.

"He was helping to cheer me up," she continued.

Her mother, busy at the stove, broke in. "Oh, I forgot to tell you, there's a letter from Sue for you. I put it on your bureau."

But Mr. Cole had caught his daughter's remark. "Why did you need cheering up, Monica?"

"I flunked my English exam, Dad. I knew I hadn't

studied the grammar, but I never thought I'd miss that many questions. The only thing I did well on was the theme." She sat down opposite her father, not quite daring to look into his eyes.

Mr. Cole couldn't hide his disappointment. "English, of all things!" He looked at her closely, noticing how tired she seemed. "I was afraid this might happen. I guess you are trying to do too much, and we should have known it from the beginning."

Monica jumped to her feet, protesting. "Oh, Dad, it's not the end of the world! I'm disappointed too, but don't give up on me. You'll see, I'll be able to handle it." She had herself almost convinced, now that her ability was being doubted.

Mr. Cole shook his head. "It seems to me you'll have to give up either school or your job."

Monica was horrified at the finality in his voice, and Mrs. Cole, who had been silent, now turned to her husband and said with conviction,

"Don't forget, George, it's only a midterm. I was against the idea of Monica's going to school and working at the same time, but now that we've given our okay, we have to stand by her. Give her a chance to show you that she can do better by the end of the term."

Mr. Cole nodded, a little sadly, Monica thought. She kissed the top of his head and went to her room,

anxious to put an end to the discussion. She took Sue's letter off the bureau.

"Monica deah," she read, "to paraphrase my favorite author, 'to flunk one exam is unfortunate, but to flunk two is sheer carelessness.' " Oh, no, Monica thought, not you, too! She read on. "I know for sure I failed my history test, and I have a strong suspicion that I goofed in French, too, but these are all minor matters, because I won the dramatic club competition, and as my first role, I'm going to be Miss Prism in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest.* I guess I told you in my last letter that I was going out for dramatics. Well, I've done nothing else since then. We apprenticed in all the different departments. I've worked with lights, painted flats, fitted costumes, sold tickets and been an usherette. We have to get special permission to work past our curfew on weekday evenings, and I've worked late so many times that I have not bags but steamer trunks under my eyes. Last week, four freshmen were voted on out of the twenty-five who were competing, and boy was I glad to be included! I felt sorry for the kids who put in so much time and then didn't even get in. And now here I am, Miss Prism, and we'll be rehearsing until the end of the term, when we 'go on' for four performances. I'll probably die of stage fright, but in the meantime, rehearsals are wonderfully interesting. There's a real flamboyant Southern

belle who plays Gwendolen with a New Orleans accent. She's a senior, and all the boys in the cast are mad for her, including the one I have my eye on. After rehearsals, we all have coffee together and talk, and goodness knows what all this will do to my grades, although I must be careful not to get on probation or else they'll make me quit dramatics."

The rest of the letter was about the sorority Sue had joined, but about that, she wrote, she would tell Monica more when she saw her friend at Christmas time. She was looking forward to lots and lots of sessions for talking over the holidays.

But Monica thought wryly, not so much time, not so very much. I'll still have to go to work, and somehow I'll have to get my grades up to a decent level before the end of the term. That certainly won't leave much time for long confidential sessions.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE GIRLS unpacked their lunches and set containers and sandwiches on the black formica counters of the magazine's test kitchen. The room was an ad writer's dream, complete with pots of pink paper geraniums arrayed on the ledge of a make-believe window, starched white curtains framing a painted view. Monica always enjoyed sitting on the tall breakfast stools, chatting with other staff members, and she had found, as her responsibilities in the office increased, that she could save a lot of time by not going out to lunch. Often, one of the staff members cooked soup on the streamlined pink electric range, or if the Art Department had been photograph-

ing food spreads in the morning, they feasted on exotic dishes.

That day, two of the Fashion Department assistants had joined Enid, Monica and the Foods Editor. It was their job to scout the fashion field for new clothes to be shown in the magazine, as well as to go "on location" with the models, helping them dress, often tucking a book into the back of their belts to make them look trimmer, or puffing out their skirts with wads of tissue paper. They both looked and dressed like cover girls, and always stuck to grapefruits, apples and cottage cheese for their midday diet.

Christine slid her sheath skirt up a little and hopped off the black stool to take her dishes to the sink. "I've really got to get going. Before I start the afternoon, I have to go to Seventh Avenue and pick up the party outfits a manufacturer promised me for Liz Duncan's grandchildren."

Enid laughed at Monica's bewildered face. "What are you so surprised about, little one?"

"You mean manufacturers just *give* Mrs. Duncan things for her grandchildren? Why is it we never get anything in Entertainment?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," Enid replied. "Terry and I do keep all the records we review, and occasionally we have extra tickets to movies and plays. Which reminds me, Terry gave me two invitations

to a preview she has already seen and I'll be busy that night. Would you like to go?"

"Of course I would! I've never been to one. Thanks a lot." Monica picked up her empty sandwich wrappings. "Guess I'd better get back to work now. Are you coming?"

Enid nodded and made for the sink to rinse her plate and silverware, while Monica stared absently at the wall near the door where the calibrators were. They always reminded her of the inside of a submarine, although the assorted dials and pressure gauges were only there to test the performance of various appliances.

Walking down the hall together, Enid told Monica that the preview was to be the film version of a current, much-discussed novel.

"Oh, that's the book Willard said he liked so much," Monica said, without thinking. "I guess I'll ask him to go with me."

Now it was Enid's turn to look startled. "Willard? Willard in there?" she asked, pointing to the Fiction office.

"Well, I wasn't going to say anything," Monica smiled smugly, "because Willard doesn't seem to think it's a good idea. It's just that we've been out once to lunch and once to dinner together, that's all. I sure wish there were more to tell, although I know you don't like him much."

Enid walked into their office and flung her hands out in amazement. "Well, what do you know? I've got to hand it to you, you're the first one on the staff to bring him out of his self-imposed exile. But why bother?"

"Oh, Enid, I think you'd like him too, if you ever got to know him. He has a fascinating mind and I really love to hear him talk. Besides, I think he's probably rather shy and an office-full of predatory females—as he says—scares him off."

Enid laughed ironically. "And here I was, lecturing you just the other day about finding out what's behind people's actions before you judge them."

Well, maybe I am growing, Monica thought before turning her attention to the papers on her desk. A few months ago, I would never have dared to ask a man like Willard to go out with me, that's for sure.

That afternoon, Monica stopped by the Fiction Department and Willard was delighted to accept. Despite her newly found confidence, she had felt her cheeks reddening when it came to the actual wording of the invitation; yet Williard's matter of fact attitude made it all very painless. She was pleased when he even suggested picking her up at home.

A few nights later, Monica, was happily wriggling into a new red wool, remembering Willard's comment on liking her in that color. She was still comb-

ing her hair when the doorbell buzzed and a few seconds later Margot popped her head in the door with,

"Mr. Kimball is here. He's really a Mister, isn't he? A real Older Man."

Monica laughed, picked up her purse and made her entrance into the living room, glad to have had a chance to do some freshening up, for a change, instead of rushing off right from the office.

Willard got to his feet when Monica came in, and she was sure his look was one of admiration, although he didn't compliment her and only continued his discussion about her father's experimental work. Pete would have blurted out, "You look just swell," she thought, and, after all the times he has come to pick me up, he still doesn't know what to say to my father.

Nevertheless, Willard was very adept at putting an end to the conversation, and a few minutes later he and Monica were driving through Central Park in a cab. The city was getting ready for Christmas. Not only store windows, but whole façades of buildings were bedecked with lights and lovely tableaus illustrating various aspects of the Christmas story. As their taxi turned right at Rockefeller Center, they caught a glimpse of gaily-dressed skaters in the glow of the twenty-story-high Christmas tree.

A spotlight, beaming from across the street, made a carpet of light in front of the preview theater. A

uniformed doorman held open the door of the cab, and Monica walked proudly down the roped off sidewalk with Willard, assuming the role of a celebrity. She was thrilled to see that, right behind them, the star of the movie was being hailed by loud applause.

"Keep cool, little one," Willard said cynically, but she pulled a face at him and replied,

"Don't be a wet blanket," sailing down the aisle ahead of him.

Before the lights went out, Monica amused herself by spotting the faces of familiar show people. I'm supposed to be getting blasé, she thought, but I still find it pretty exciting to see them in the flesh.

The movie went on, and Monica and Willard watched intently. At one point she wanted to comment on a scene, but he shushed her, too absorbed to listen. I'm certainly glad he likes it, she thought. I'd feel awful if I had asked him to sit through a turkey.

On the way out, Monica was eager to discover Willard's reaction but was interrupted by two young men who waved to him in the lobby and then came over to them. They launched into a discussion of the comparative values of the movie and the book, and Monica was forgotten in the vigorous argument that followed. She gathered from the conversation that the animated pair were connected with the firm that published the book, but she quickly lost interest

in the discussion, which had centered on a fine point of the author's intention.

Finally, the tirade died down, and Willard turned to her, an apologetic look on his face, realizing he had neglected to introduce the two men to her. With that, Monica's feelings were soothed, but only temporarily, for Willard was asking his friends to join them for a cup of coffee. She thought, in irritation, why did he have to ask them? She was annoyed at herself for not having read the book with which they were so concerned and envisioned an evening of being left out.

But the coffee klatch didn't last long, and on the way home Willard told her how glad he was to have seen the movie and what a nice gesture it had been for her to ask him.

She smiled up at him happily. Suddenly, as they neared Monica's apartment building, his arm went around her shoulders, surprising her, yet making her feel warm and secure.

"Gosh, you're small," he whispered, a tender look in his eyes. A thought winged through her mind. This is the first time I've ever been glad of it. A brand new feeling of expectancy came over her, and in the next moment he was kissing her, just as she knew he would.

Later they stood at the entrance to her apartment

building, his arms around her, his cheek brushing against her hair, and he said,

"Why did I wait so long? I thought you were too young, but you like it fine, don't you?"

Now what does that mean, she thought, thudding back to earth. Does he think I'm an old hand at this? I've never felt this way before, doesn't he realize it? Abruptly, she said good night and went inside, a puzzled sensation replacing the glow of a few moments before.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE LONG table in the conference room had been pushed to one side and an appetizing buffet luncheon was spread out on it. Bright Christmas mobiles, made by the Art Department, rotated slowly in the air, and a bulging grab bag of gifts slouched cheerfully against the tall tree in the corner. All the staff members milled about, balancing their paper plates and cups of punch, discussing plans for the coming week end.

Monica glanced at her watch, then explained to Enid that, since the office would close right after the party, Peter was picking her up at two, on his way from the train. He had written that he was anxious to see her, and that they could talk for a while

over coffee before he went home to see his family.

"Think he'll rekindle any old sparks?" Enid asked. "You haven't seen him since the fall."

Monica shrugged her shoulders. In the last few days, since her date with Willard, she, too, had done a lot of wondering. Willard, she noticed, was keeping himself way across the room, talking to one of the space salesmen. Later, as she opened her grab bag package, she saw him looking at the mistletoe hanging from the center of the room. He caught her eye, winked and looked amused. Hoping no one had noticed him, she turned away, color rising in her cheeks.

A few minutes later, the receptionist looked in and beckoned to her. Eagerly Monica hurried to the reception room, stretching out her arms in a warm welcome. Peter squeezed her hands, then shuffled uncomfortably in his white buckskin shoes. Monica took in the tweed jacket, plaid tie, slim charcoal trousers. Did she look that young, she wondered, suddenly embarrassed by the conspicuous school sticker on his suitcase.

"I'll get my hat and coat and ask Terry if it's all right to leave now," she said to him. "Why don't you look through the magazine and see what I've been laboring over, while I get my desk cleared away?" She gave him a big smile, ashamed that she should feel self-conscious about him.

The party had broken up, and the staff was be-

ginning to stream through the reception room, on the way to their respective offices. As Monica headed through the door, Willard caught up with her, walking beside her down the hall, his hands in his pockets.

"It's such a nice day, how about coming to the Museum of Modern Art with me? Or do you have to go home and trim the tree?"

"No, we're doing that tonight. But I'm afraid I can't, anyway. I have a date."

"The little boy in the reception room?"

Monica glared at him, angry at his remark, ashamed to hear her own feelings put into words. "Well, at least it's someone my own age," she thought, not deigning to reply as she stalked on ahead of him and into her office. I don't know why I let what Willard says bother me so, she fumed, opening and closing desk drawers with violence. Everything was going so well, and then, suddenly, he had to spoil it all.

As soon as they were away from the building, Monica was able to concentrate on Peter. They walked to a nearby luncheonette and talked over cups of steaming hot chocolate. Pete seemed to be doing very well at college. He talked about his fraternity brothers with great enthusiasm and told her about making the Dean's List. Monica avoided mentioning the results of her midterm exams, afraid of an "I told you so." She noticed that, except for some polite questions, he didn't seem too interested in her job

and, for her part, the antics of his buddies did not strike her as very amusing. He had been practicing his skiing a lot, Pete said, and was planning a few days on the slopes in Vermont, right after Christmas. His roommate was going, too.

"Why don't you and Sue come with us?" Pete asked, suddenly full of the familiar enthusiasm. "It would only be for three or four days, and we'd be back before New Year's."

Monica looked at him, surprised. "But Peter, I can't go, you know I have a job."

"Don't you get a Christmas vacation?"

"Just two long week ends. But no office is closed the whole week!"

"Well, couldn't you ask for a couple of days? Or just be sick? Are you that indispensable?" Then he looked at her suspiciously. "Or is it that tall, skinny guy I saw walking out of the reception room with you? Who is he, anyway?"

Monica couldn't hide her annoyance. "No, of course I'm not indispensable. And that tall, skinny guy is Willard Kimball, the Fiction Editor. He's nothing to me, he just comes with the place." The words didn't ring true, even to herself. She continued defensively. "But if they gave me a few days, they'd have to do it for everyone. And we have several deadlines to meet that week. I'd feel like a slouch if I just took off."

Peter seemed disappointed, and the conversation became difficult after that. Monica was almost relieved when he suggested taking her home. At the elevator door, he said he'd be calling her as soon as his plans for the holidays were more definite. She started to ask if he'd be coming over that night, as usual, but stopped herself, thinking the suggestion should really come from him. He used to make a special funny face at me through the glass porthole in the elevator door, she thought as she rode up to her floor, but today he walked out without even waiting for the door to close.

Later, while she was dusting off the Christmas ornaments and waiting for her father and the girls, who had gone to bring their tree up from the basement, the phone rang. Monica ran to answer it, half hoping it might be Peter, but it was Sue. Dispensing even with "hello," Sue demanded excitedly,

"Hey, whatever did you do to Peter? Did you two have a fight?"

"Hi! When did you get in? I didn't expect to hear from you until tomorrow. No, we didn't have a fight, exactly. When did you talk to him?"

Sue still sounded breathless. "Well, I took an earlier train and surprised my folks. I had no sooner taken off my coat when Pete phoned and invited me to go skiing next week. I didn't know what to say. I told him I'd have to discuss it with Mother and Dad, be-

cause I wanted to stall till I could check with you. Isn't he your boy any more?"

This certainly proves he's not, Monica thought. Over the phone, she said merely, "You go ahead and go skiing if you want to. I can't go because of my job, and that's what seems to have thrown Peter."

Sue was silent for a while. "Well, we can talk about it some more, Mo. But I don't think you can blame it all on the skiing trip. I guess you've grown away from him, huh? In fact, probably from both of us."

"Oh, stop it, Sue!" Monica protested. "Call me when you wake up, and we'll plan to get together. I don't have classes tomorrow, so we can have a good reunion. And don't you dare give me any more of that growing away stuff."

Yet after Monica had hung up, as she walked slowly back toward the living room, Sue's words echoed in her ears. She's right as far as Peter goes, she thought. She had grown away from him. Strange that she should feel so sorry. She had always thought that growth was only to the good.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IT SEEMED to Monica that January was over before it had even begun. With final exams coming up, she had really buckled down to studying, spending evenings, lunch hours and week ends surrounded by notes and textbooks. The magazine, too, was keeping her hopping, and her pride in her work had been doubled by the confidence even Terry was beginning to show.

"Speak to my secretary, she handles all of that," Monica had heard Teresa saying over the phone, and her ego had received a much-needed boost.

She found herself missing meals, often falling asleep on the bus or the subway, but the possibility of failing in her exams made a letup in schedule completely

out of the question. She had taken very little time off. One evening, she went with her sisters to a movie for which she had press passes, and once she had dinner with Enid and her husband. Willard had asked her out several times, and she finally went to the theater with him, unwilling to risk the end of this friendship which raised so many questions in her mind.

Yet despite all her studies, when the time came for final exams, Monica was in a real panic. Larry had taken to tutoring her and Mrs. Muller on astronomy, and she felt fairly safe about that, but she wondered if she had learned enough English and history during the past three weeks to offset her poor midterm grades.

She had arranged to meet Larry Simon on the day the grades were posted.

"So you can pick me up in case I faint," she had said to him. And when she saw that she had passed all her subjects, she almost felt like it, from sheer relief. Larry, of course, had done very well, and as they walked through the wings of University Hall, where the grades were posted, she marveled at how skillfully he had balanced his job and school work.

They stopped outside for a moment, idly looking over the campus. "Well," said Monica happily, taking in a whiff of the cold February air, "where do

we go from here? Shall we take a walk, or get some hot chocolate and toast my passing?"

"And where do we go from here after that?" Larry questioned, looking thoughtful. "Do you realize we won't be taking astronomy together, any more, and no other class, either?"

Suddenly Monica was startled to discover how she had come to count on their frequent meetings and how close they had been drawn over the past term, even though their talk inevitably centered around school and jobs, rather than the usual boy-girl patter.

"No," Monica answered slowly, "I really hadn't realized . . ."

"Well," he said, taking the matter into his own hands, "I have an idea. When we find out what nights our classes are during the new semester, we'll plan a weekly date after school's out."

"Okay. I'd like that!" Monica replied, pleased that he, too, wanted to continue the friendship.

And so it was that every Wednesday evening after class, Monica would find Larry waiting for her outside of John Jay Hall, and together they would walk down the stairs to the Lion's Den. Larry would carry the tray, and Monica would deal out napkins and tableware—and usually slabs of apple pie and coffee from the self-service counter. Under one of the tall windows, set high near the ceiling, they would find a booth and settle down to an evening's conversation.

Mrs. Muller and one of their other classmates had joined them once; another week they had danced to the music from the juke box.

But tonight, they sat quietly alone, reviewing the week's happenings, and to Larry, Monica seemed unusually tired. She leaned her head against the dark wood-paneled walls, and the soulful notes of the Whiffenpoofs' song, coming from the large group at the next table, made her frown.

She usually enjoyed the atmosphere of the Den—the snatches of intense intellectual discussions, the many languages one heard, the colorful saris and turbans worn by some of the foreign students. She even liked the long, thin clouds of smoke that hung low over the dark wooden tables, letting her imagination conjure up different images, but this evening they only seemed to irritate her eyes and make her head ache.

Larry watched her closely for a while and then asked, "What's the matter, Mo, don't you feel well?"

Monica shook her head. "Oh, I'm all right. Maybe I've had too much to do at work, that's all. Also, I've been determined to keep in step with my homework, right from the beginning, this term." Slowly, her finger traced the scratchy outlines of a name that had been deeply etched into the surface of the table. "But maybe we should cut it short this time, Larry,

if you don't mind. I guess I could use some extra sleep."

Later, as she sank down on her bed to take her shoes off, she vaguely remembered that Larry had taken her home for the first time since she had known him. That was nice of him, she thought drowsily, but it wasn't really necessary. I just need to close my eyes for a few minutes. She fell back on the pillow, telling herself that in a moment she would get undressed and slip under the covers, but immediately she fell into a deep slumber. Her sleep was fitful and filled with dreaming. Warm and stifled, she felt herself going through a close, smoky room, thinking how stuffy it was. Suddenly, there was Peter, saying, "It's not stuffy. You're stuffy!" And as she came closer, it wasn't Peter at all, she realized. It was Willard mocking her, a grin on his face.

When Monica awoke, it was early morning, and she became slowly aware that she had been sleeping in her clothes, on top of her bedspread. Quickly she shook her head and tried to get up. Her legs felt unsteady but she groped her way toward the bathroom, undressed and stepped into the shower, anxious to get into some fresh clothes so her mother wouldn't realize how tired she'd been. The shower revived her somewhat, and at breakfast she managed to sound her usual self, although, once or twice, she

thought her mother was looking at her with concern in her eyes.

By the time Monica arrived at her desk, the dizzy sensation of the night before was with her again. She did her work quietly and ploddingly and occasionally she thought Enid was looking at her in the same way that her mother had.

"You haven't said a word all morning. Are you feeling all right?" Enid asked.

"Oh, I didn't sleep very well last night. I guess I'm just tired."

Monica got up to take some final "blues" to the Production Department and felt so shaky when she stood that she had to hold on to her chair for support. In a second, Enid was at her side, saying to Terry,

"Look at her, she can hardly stand. Don't you think she should go right home?"

Monica started to protest, but Terry nodded agreement. So Enid bundled her into her coat, and accompanied her downstairs. Without hesitation, she hailed a taxi, gave the driver Monica's address and waved her off.

Later on, Monica could recall her mother's frightened face when she found her coming home in the middle of the day. Mrs. Cole had helped her to undress. Never had bed seemed so inviting. She burrowed her face into the cool pillow, mumbling,

"Just let me sleep a little bit, Mom, and I'll be fine. Call me in time for classes tonight. I'm sure I'll be rested by then. . . ."

When Monica awoke, the room was dark. She noticed that the blinds were down and became aware of loud whispers coming from the hall. She caught a few words, enough to realize that Mary wanted to come into the room, and Mrs. Cole wouldn't let her.

"Let her come in, Mom," she called out, surprised to hear herself sound so hoarse. "I'm awake."

Mrs. Cole walked in, a glass of orange juice in her hand. "I can't let her come in, honey. The doctor said to keep the girls away."

"The doctor? You shouldn't have called him. I'm all right. I guess it's about time for me to go to school." She sat up . . . and felt her head reeling violently. Her mother helped her to lie down again.

"You've been sick, Monica. It's Friday afternoon now, and there's no school tonight. Don't you even remember the doctor was here? You've been asleep for twenty-four hours!"

Monica looked unbelievingly at her mother. "That's impossible! What on earth is the matter with me?"

"Nothing very serious. Just a virus, but you're probably quite weak. And the rugged schedule you've been following for the past few months hasn't

helped. The doctor said you should sleep as much as possible."

Monica shook her head in wonderment. "Imagine, sleeping twenty-four hours! What about the office, do they know? And I'll just have to go to school tomorrow morning!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort. You still have a temperature, and I'm going to see to it that you stay in bed. I called your office as soon as the doctor left and spoke to Miss Conti. She said you should take your time and get well. Now drink your orange juice."

Monica suddenly realized she was hungry and mentioned it to her mother.

"Good! That's a fine sign," Mrs. Cole said, picking up the empty glass and going toward the door. "I made you some soup. Shall I bring it in right now?"

Monica nodded, then closed her eyes. In a little while her mother returned with the soup, and Monica thought gratefully, as she slowly sipped the steaming broth, how nice it was to be babied once in a while.

Margot's face peeked in through the door. "Hi! How are you feeling? Did Mom tell you that someone named Larry called last night? Who is he? Boy, where did you get all these men?"

Monica smiled, but Mrs. Cole waved Margot away. "Monica will tell you all about him tomorrow, when she's feeling a little stronger. Yes, dear, Mr. Simon

did call last night. He said he had a feeling you weren't well and wanted to know if it was just his imagination. He asked me for the names of your instructors and said he would pick up your assignments when he goes to school on Saturday and drop them off here on his way home. I thought it was awfully nice of him to suggest it," she continued. "I know how anxious you are not to fall behind in your work, so I said it would be fine."

Monica smiled and sighed contentedly. "That is nice of him. And I'm glad you'll be able to meet him."

"You seem to know him quite well," Mrs. Cole said. "Why hasn't he asked you out?"

Monica explained about Larry's commitments, then slowly realized her eyelids were growing heavy again. Her mother smoothed the pillow, tucked in the sheets, then kissed her on the forehead and left the room. Monica closed her eyes and smiled to think that tomorrow would bring a visit from Larry.

The next day Monica felt a little better, although she had to lean on her mother's arm when she went to wash her face and put on some lipstick before Larry's visit. Mrs. Cole had lent her a lacy blue bedjacket which she herself wore on those rare Sundays when the girls brought breakfast to her in bed. Monica was sitting up, idly wishing there were a ruffled canopy

over her head to match her feeling of delicate femininity, when Larry walked in, an oddly shaped bundle tucked awkardly under his arm. He handed it to her, anxiously inquiring about her health.

She answered cheerfully, "I'm almost as good as new, thank you. What's in the package? It feels soft!"

It turned out to be a large blue and white kangaroo, with a Columbia "C" on the pocket which held the baby. Monica was delighted. She laughed and sat him up on the pillow next to her.

"He'll keep me good company while I'm confined to my bed. Whatever made you think of it?"

"I thought you might need a pal for your lion," Larry answered, half embarrassed.

Monica looked surprised. "My goodness, I didn't even know I had mentioned my funny lion! And you remembered?"

What a silly-looking thing for such a serious young man to pick out, she thought gratefully. She thanked him warmly for the gift—and for the assignments he had brought her.

"They'll certainly come in handy. I may have to stay in all next week, and I'll have plenty of time to study."

They spoke for a while, then Mr. Cole looked in and asked if he could join them. In no time, he and Larry were deeply involved in a conversation on

chemical engineering. Monica, listening patiently, soon felt herself getting drowsy and wishing they would let her sleep. When they became aware of her silence, Mr. Cole suggested they leave the room. Larry patted her hair gently and told her to get well soon. He promised that he'd be back the following Saturday. Then he left the room, and she could hear the two male voices talking softly out in the hall. She patted the kangaroo on his head, the way Larry had done to her, then dozed off again.

It seemed to Monica that she slept through the whole of the next week, too. Actually, in between naps, she found this a good time to give her much neglected short story another going over. She did quite a bit of studying, too, and had fun with her sisters who, after the first few days, had been allowed into her room. Since she had started to work, their time together had been much curtailed, and she now enjoyed resuming their close relationship. As soon as they came from school, Mary and Margot would run into her room, and the three of them would play long games of monopoly and three-handed rummy. Mrs. Cole shook her head wonderingly that so few quarrels should take place in her usually hectic home. Mary and Margot went to the library for books Monica wanted to read, played her favorite records, even brought her dinner to her on a tray.

One day Enid telephoned, and Monica realized how much she missed her work, although she had welcomed the break in her tight routine. They chatted, and Enid brought Monica up-to-date on happenings at the office.

"Friend of yours wants to talk to you," she said after a while. A warm male voice greeted Monica, and she felt her face reddening a little when she realized it was Willard. He said they all missed her, and he was looking forward to seeing her on Monday.

Only after she had hung up did it dawn on her that Willard had spoken from the Entertainment office. What was he doing there, she wondered. It's not like him to go visiting in other people's offices. Certainly he and Enid have never been big friends. She had to get back there, she told herself, to find out what was going on.

Friday she was able to get out of bed for a few hours, and Saturday found her waiting for Larry in the living room, comfortable in her blue slacks and a new yellow sweater. They spent the afternoon listening to records, taking turns at making the selections. Larry kept heading for her parents' collection of classical music. Monica felt, although he didn't mention it, that he found it very pleasant to relax in a congenial home. Wonder what it's like to live by yourself, she thought, and not have anyone to take care of you if you do get sick?

Monica was glad when Mrs. Cole came into the living room to ask Larry if he'd like to join the family for dinner. He nodded eagerly—and promptly wondered if there was anything he could do to help.

"Oh no," said Mrs. Cole, "you stay and keep Monica happy. She hasn't seen anyone but her family in a week, and she must be getting pretty bored with us."

Larry grinned. "That's a pleasure!"

It is for me, too, Monica said to herself—far more than I realized.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"WHERE HAVE you been?" asked Charlie, the office elevator boy who took Monica up when she returned to work on Monday morning. "Not away on vacation?"

She smiled and shook her head. "No, I was sick," she said shyly, feeling the eyes of other passengers on her.

The reception room seemed more attractive than ever, and the girl behind the desk smiled a big welcome and inquired about her health. Monica walked down the hall feeling very much a part of the place, looking forward to a busy workday. But she wasn't prepared for what greeted her when she opened the door to her office.

Willard stood, his back to her, bent low over her desk and, next to him, Teresa fussed with something hidden from view. They straightened up quickly when they heard the door open, looking like children caught up to their elbows in a cookie jar.

Teresa groaned. "Why did you have to come in early?"

That's a fine way to welcome me back, thought Monica, until she saw Terry's coffee mug on her own desk, sprouting a few spring flowers. On her blotter lay several more, waiting to be arranged.

"Walking to work this morning, I passed a flower cart over on Lexington Avenue," Willard smiled proudly, "and I thought these daffodils were just what the doctor ordered for your first day back."

"Oh, they're beautiful! What a lovely idea!" exclaimed Monica.

"I only had a dixie cup to put them in," he added, "but your boss here threw in her coffee mug and her talent as a flower arranger."

Enid came in just then, planting a kiss on Monica's forehead and dutifully admiring the flowers. The ring of the phone summoned Terry to the Art Department, to confer on a coming layout. After a few minutes, Willard left, too.

"Tell me," Monica inquired eagerly, as soon as the door had closed behind him, "what goes on? Wil-

lard was here when you called me last week, and now here he is again, publicly bearing flowers."

"Oh ho!" Enid said portentously. "Great things have been happening! He came in here one day to ask how you were, and we decided to phone you together. Then I guess he realized that Terry and I don't bite, and he's been back several times. And you know, you were right! He's really not a bad guy!"

"Well, I'm glad I was sick then," Monica said, "if it meant bringing the bear out of his cave."

Several times that day, as she worked busily to catch up on the correspondence that had accumulated during her absence, her thoughts returned to Willard and the part she might have played in his coming out of hiding. She had never before suspected that her influence could truly alter someone else's attitude, and it was a strangely gratifying feeling, although it made her laugh, to think of herself as Willard's mentor.

Monica was still absorbed in her duties when hunger pangs signaled it was way past her lunch time. Passing Willard's door, she thought she would stop in just long enough to thank him again for his welcoming bouquet.

He shrugged off her thanks and said, "Just see that you keep well from now on, that's all. By the way, think you'll be feeling strong enough by Friday to come along to a cocktail party? Holloway Press is

introducing one of their new authors and it might be fun for you to see one of those extravaganzas."

Monica nodded eagerly. "Sounds swell to me." Then, remembering her feeling of inadequacy the night of the movie première, she added, "Hope I won't be too much like a fish out of water."

Willard smiled. "Well, at least you'll be the prettiest fish there."

Monica waved and walked out of his office, thinking, well, that's a left-handed compliment, if I ever heard one!

For the rest of the day there was little time to think of herself. She was still typing steadily at five-thirty, when Enid left. Teresa came over to her desk, holding some yellow copy paper and some photos.

"I just finished this story. First thing in the morning, would you like to try writing the captions to go along with these pictures?"

Monica's hand shot forward so quickly that Terry laughed.

"Now, don't try to do them right away! Tomorrow's plenty of time."

Monica was surprised to see her boss pulling up a chair and settling herself for a heart-to-heart chat. She moved her flowers aside to make more room, wondering what Teresa would have to say next.

"You know, I've been meaning to point out to you not to overdo it. This business of rushing up to school

straight from work probably had a lot to do with your getting sick." Teresa hesitated, picking a non-existent speck of dust from her black skirt.

What is she driving at, Monica asked herself.

"I don't like giving other people advice," Terry continued, "but you know, I was in much the same boat as you when I started to work. I was going to school and holding down a job at the same time, and I know it requires good management to carry it off successfully."

Monica smiled, surprised and pleased at the editor's interest, happy that Teresa had at last talked a little about herself. They spoke a while, comparing notes, with Teresa offering several short cuts that she herself had learned. Then they got ready to leave the office and walked toward the subway together.

Is this the beginning of a new Terry, Monica wondered as she rode home, or was it just an off-guard moment?

During her lunch hour on Thursday, Monica bought herself a new dress—a slim navy sheath which the saleslady said was just right for March, and which she hoped would make her look very sophisticated when she went to the cocktail party with Willard.

Friday evening, Monica left the office with her escort around five, having first asked permission to go half an hour before closing time. Terry had agreed

reluctantly, leaving Monica with the impression that, despite the thoughtful words of a few days ago, she still put business before pleasure. As Monica was closing the door behind her, she overheard Terry saying to Enid,

"Now what's come over Willard? Is he trying to spirit away our child wonder?"

On the way to the party, Monica tried to forget the unpleasant remark and busily told Willard about the work she had been doing on her short story during her week at home. As in the past, she found herself warming to his friendly interest in her writing. When they arrived at the apartment where the cocktail party was being held—it was the home of the vice-president of the publishing firm—there were only a few people there. The guest of honor was introduced to them as they came in: a stocky, gray-haired gentleman, wearing a tweed jacket with leather patches on the elbows.

Monica had learned, by looking up some publicity releases, that he was a professor of medieval history who had written a novel about his favorite period. She had expected an aesthetic young scholar, rather than the robust country squire whose conversation now fascinated Willard.

The three of them sat on a billowy, S-curved couch, covered with turquoise linen, and, awkward as this arrangement was, Monica was happy to find

that she was enough at ease to interject comments now and then which held the author's attention. What little furniture there was about was modernistic, flanked by towering potted plants. As more and more guests came down the steps into the sunken living room, the surroundings became obliterated, except for a series of wooden masks on the walls, which Monica thought were watching the proceedings at least as keenly as she.

Soon the professor was swept up by a young publicity woman who wanted him to meet a man from the Story Department of a Hollywood studio. And when Monica turned to Willard again, she found that he was being engulfed by a group of young men in horn-rimmed glasses and women looking like the fashion pages of *Living Today*. In a moment, Willard introduced Monica to all of them, then started to go for a round of drinks. He made his way toward the bar, calling back over his shoulder,

"By the way, did you want some ginger ale?"

She shook her head, annoyed at herself for feeling so embarrassed.

"What did you think of the good professor?" a tall, red-headed girl was asking her. "I saw you two deep in conversation."

"Oh," answered Monica, wishing she were taller, too, "I was very impressed by his knowledge. Yet

he's not at all intimidating, and he's quite easy to talk to."

The redhead giggled. "He's really out of this world, isn't he?"

"Real square," one of the men cut in. "Surprises me where he learned all that earthy stuff he uses in his book."

Monica made no further effort to reply while the man, reaching up to put his arm around the redhead's shoulders, pulled her over to another corner, to greet some people who had just come in.

Willard came back with a tray, handed drinks to what was left of the group, smiled at Monica and asked,

"Where did the other two go?"

Monica pointed them out and he headed off in their direction, glasses in hand, leaving her alone. She made a few sporadic attempts at conversation with groups scattered here and there, then thankfully remembered she could spend some minutes powdering her nose. When she came back into the hall, she stood for a second on the steps, overlooking the living room, trying to find Willard and get back to him.

Now voices were raised above the normal level, each trying to be heard over the din, and in every direction intense conversations were being held, to the accompaniment of waving hands and exaggerated gestures. She caught sight of the professor, well sur-

rounded, yet a little apart from the gesticulating group. Monica thought: I wonder if he feels at all the way I do. I wonder if anyone else here does. They seem to thrive on all this, or maybe they've merely had more time to learn to hide the shyness.

A purple skirt caught her eye and spotlighted Willard, standing alongside it. She moved through the crowd and planted herself quietly at his side. He introduced her to the woman in the dazzling outfit, and the name told her this was a literary agent whose stories Monica used to bring to Willard in her early days on the magazine. Monica stared at the large, mobile earrings that swung around the woman's wrinkled face, at the copper pendant adorning the black blouse. She listened patiently, waiting for a break in the conversation, then, realizing that none would come, she said softly,

"Willard, I really should be getting home for dinner. Do you mind if I go ahead? You don't have to take me home."

He looked at her apologetically. "You're sure you don't mind? I would like to stay a little longer."

Before she could say anything, the agent had resumed their conversation, and Monica went to look for her coat. She wondered whether she should thank the host, but wasn't sure she could remember which one he was, so she just walked out into the hall and rang for the elevator.

Until Monica found herself outside, she hadn't realized how hot and smoky it was in the apartment. Boy, that surely wasn't for me, she thought, breathing the fresh night air happily. And neither is Willard. The thought struck her suddenly—and with great finality. She felt enormously relieved. It was no longer a dilemma, whether he was too old for her or not, whether he ignored her or was too attentive, whether or not she could keep up with his world. He was a nice man, but just not for her. She had really hated that party. She was glad he had asked her, though, if only because it highlighted the difference between them.

To celebrate her great decision, she hailed a cab and sank into the leather upholstery with a feeling of complete satisfaction.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SUDDENLY IT was May. Monica, the first to arrive at work, immediately went to the windows and opened them wide. There's nothing like the impact of spring on New York, she thought, marveling at the contrast between the Gothic spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral and the trim, massive outlines of Rockefeller Center. Today, both stood in sharp relief against a bright blue sky. Monica thought back to that day—almost a year ago, she realized with a start—when she had first come to *Living Today*, to be interviewed for a temporary job. She was still gazing out the window when Enid burst into the office, whistling an unrecognizable, but happy-sounding tune.

"It *is* a beautiful day," Monica agreed, "but what makes you quite *that* happy? Come to think of it, beautiful day or not, you've been acting as if you had swallowed a canary for quite a while now. And what are these apples that you've taken to bringing to the office lately?" she asked as she watched Enid open a brown paper bag and line several red-cheeked MacIntosh apples neatly on her desk.

"Ah ha! Just you wait and see," Enid said cryptically. "And don't be so nosy," she added, sticking her tongue out playfully.

Just then Teresa walked in and looked in surprise at her assistant.

"Is spring getting you, too?" she asked.

"We-e-ell, yes, it really is," Enid grinned, "in more ways than one. In fact, boss lady, there's something I want to announce. I've kept it to myself too long, and now I'm bursting to tell you."

"Well, let's have it, Enid. I want to get down to work." Teresa was sitting at her desk, looking over her shoulder at her assistant. Monica, sensing the excitement in Enid's voice, wished for the hundredth time that their editor could be a little more unbending.

Enid picked up one of the apples on her desk, took a big bite and said happily,

"*I* am going to have a baby." She sat back proudly, almost waiting for applause.

Monica let out a squeal. "Oh Enid, isn't that wonderful! When?"

Terry whirled around in her chair, jumped up and quickly walked over to her assistant's desk. She held both arms out, then clumsily took Enid's hand in hers.

"That is exciting news, Enid. How long have you known?"

"Oh, I've known a long time," Enid answered, her eyes sparkling. "The baby is coming toward the end of September. I want to work as long as possible."

Teresa looked concerned. "Won't it be bad for the baby, or too exhausting for you? Aren't you supposed to be taking special care of yourself? I think you should stop working!"

Monica turned a suspicious look her way. Terry sounded sincere enough, she thought, or is she just trying to get rid of another assistant?

But Enid looked at her editor with amusement.

"Oh Terry, go on! I'm not sick. You talk just like my grandmother, you, a modern career girl!"

Terry shrugged her shoulders and went back to her chair.

"That's just it, I guess. I've been so busy being a career girl that the thought of having a baby seems part of another world." Her dark eyes strayed to the window, and for a few seconds she was silent. Then she let out a quick laugh.

"I guess that was my 'other world' background

coming out in me. In my family, a mother-to-be was babied and pampered by everyone. That's the old world tradition." She smiled, a little bitterly, Monica thought. "That only goes for the first child, though. When you have ten, like my mother did, there just isn't time for being put on a pedestal."

She turned to Enid and nodded agreement. "You're right. Stay here as long as you feel up to it. I suppose you ought to tell Mrs. Duncan in plenty of time, though."

"Oh yes. I just wanted you two to be the first to know," Enid replied, then turned to her typewriter, as if to put an end to the personal talk.

Monica looked at the back of her friend's head a while longer, suddenly aware that her desk would soon be empty. No matter who takes her place, she thought, it will never be anyone as nice to work with.

A few days later, Monica was hurrying toward the Lion's Den to meet Larry for their weekly date. She could hardly wait until they were settled in their favorite booth before blurting out her news.

"Guess what? I've got an honest-to-goodness assignment! Tomorrow I'm going on an interview . . . alone, all by myself! And then I have to write up the story and it's going to have my by-line, I think, if all goes well . . . and boy, am I ever scared!"

For a moment Larry just smiled and then he leaned over and gave her hand a squeeze.

"Honey, that's great news! Monica Cole, Girl Reporter!" He seemed as excited about it as she was, and kept his hand on hers as he asked for more details. Then she went on to tell him about Enid and of her surprise at Terry's unexpected gentleness.

"Although it was Enid's idea that the story fall into my lap," she continued, "I do think that Terry, too, wants to see how I'll make out on my own. At the same time, she seems truly anxious to ease Enid's load."

"It sounds to me," Larry said thoughtfully, "as if they are starting to test you, to see if you could fill Enid's shoes."

Monica sighed. "Well, that has occurred to me, too, and I guess that's one reason why I'm so scared. Do you really have that feeling? You know, I fooled myself about that once before." She hesitated a moment, then went on. "Yet I have learned a lot since then. At any rate, it'll be months before we really know anything. Enid won't be leaving until fall."

She leaned back in the booth, sipping her Coke, and sensed a new feeling of security, a new warmth that came from Larry's concern for her future. Funny, she thought, I know Willard's interest is genuine too, but it's more of a professional interest in a young writer. With Larry, it seems more like a shar-

ing—a mutual, personal exchange of hopes and dreams. . . .

Hopes and dreams were forgotten in the last minute, down-to-earth cramming Monica had to do for her coming out as a professional feature writer.

She found herself hastily eating lunch at her desk, looking over a biography of the bandleader she was to meet that afternoon. She read up on the kinds of instruments that made up the band, compiling a list of questions she would ask later. Under her elbow was an encyclopedia of music, borrowed from the office reference library, and every once in a while she would look up a jazz term that was foreign to her.

At about two o'clock, she put on a small blue straw hat, then stood on tiptoe to get a more complete view of the sheath dress she had bought to wear to Willard's party of a week ago. The mirror told her she at least looked the part of a smart magazine woman, although at this moment she felt a closer kinship with her scared schoolgirl self.

She forgot herself completely as soon as she arrived at the theater. She sat through the stage show, making mental notes on the performer she was to interview, and then was ushered backstage. The newsreel had just flashed on for the beginning of the afternoon showing, and the members of the band were filing up the stairs—instruments in hand—from

the basement level to which the bandstand sank before the lights were dimmed and the screen was unveiled. Danny Allen, the man Monica had come to meet, was nowhere in sight, but she saw his manager, Jack Monroe, waving several of the band members over to one side. To get to him, she climbed over a ladder and stepped gingerly around several stagehands who were hammering at scenery.

"Danny's having some pictures taken in his dressing room," Mr. Monroe called when he saw her approach. "Have you got fifteen minutes? You'll still have plenty of time to talk before he's on again, okay? Meanwhile, I corralled some of the boys in the band for you. They'll help fill in some of the background on Dan."

Before he could start the introductions, Monica smiled at the clarinetist and held out her hand.

"You must be Phil McGee," she said, recalling the "bios" on her desk.

He shook her hand. "Well, I never thought anybody knew the sidemen by name!"

She remembered several of the others, too, and they fell easily into conversation. After a few minutes, Mr. Monroe broke in:

"You seem to be doing fine. You really don't need me, so why don't I go see if I can find Danny?"

She smiled, pleased at his confidence, and continued gathering atmosphere for her story. After a while

the arranger came over and asked the men to join the rest of the band for a run-over of a new number. She went along and sat on a packing crate as the men rehearsed, her mind filled with the stories they had told her of one-nightstands and endless bus rides.

It was almost time for the next stage show when Jack Monroe arrived, pulling Mr. Allen by the arm. Monica felt like giggling at the sight of the tall, husky man being dragged along like a stubborn child. He pulled free when he saw her, straightening up, and turned a gleaming smile her way.

"If I had known that such a pretty girl was waiting for me, I would have told that stupid photographer to snap it up," he said, running a hand over his curly black hair.

She replied that she hadn't minded the wait at all. Her next feeling was one of disappointment when he said,

"I'm afraid I won't be able to see you before the next show, after all, because I have to make some changes in one of our new numbers. Can you wait until later?"

Monica shook her head and asked if she could come back tomorrow instead.

Jack Monroe broke in quickly, "Sure, sure, tomorrow will be fine. Why don't you come after the early show? Dan is usually free mornings." Then, turning to the bandleader, he added sternly, "And you'd bet-

ter make sure you don't have any other engagements, either!"

Mr. Allen shook Monica's hand, again apologizing, and Jack Monroe guided her to the back door of the theater.

"Give my love to Liz Duncan when you get back," he said, opening the green metal door.

"Oh, do you know Mrs. Duncan?" Monica asked.

"I've known her for years," he answered. "Went to school with her husband."

They spoke a few more seconds, then Monica thanked him again and stepped outside. She was immediately surrounded by a dozen schoolgirls with autograph books in their hands who eyed her skeptically, then seemed to decide she was no celebrity, after all. She hailed a taxi, got in and quickly started to jot down notes on a pad that was in her pocketbook. On the whole, she felt that the first part of the interview had gone well, but she couldn't get over the feeling of frustration at not having spoken more than a few words to Danny Allen. Still, she told herself, she had soaked up a lot of atmosphere, and that would come in very handy when she started to write up the story.

Monica hurried through the reception room, eager to get to her typewriter and also to tell Enid that she was over at least the first part of the hump. In the hallway, she ran into Willard. They hadn't really

talked since she had walked out of the cocktail party, and she wondered whether he was annoyed at her. But evidently no such thought had occurred to him.

"I hear all kinds of things are happening in your office," he said pleasantly.

"Oh, you mean about Enid. Yes, isn't it wonderful news?" she asked. She tried to think of a way to indicate that she had work to do, without seeming too abrupt.

"Yes, I guess it's fine news." He looked a little doubtful. "Although I had thought she liked her job. Seems too bad she had to give it up, just when she's starting to get somewhere. Anyway, I wanted to ask you whether you'd go out with me again. Friend of mine is back from Hollywood after having a script accepted, and he's throwing himself a welcome home shindig."

"Oh Willard, no, I just couldn't go through another one of those!" The words were out before she could check them. She could see a puzzled look on his face. She tried to explain. "Don't misunderstand me, Willard, I'm terribly flattered that you should want to take me out at all. But I think I have a long way to go before I grow to appreciate one of those get-togethers. You'd be happier going with one of those experienced girls who seem to surround you at these parties. Actually, this may sound crazy, but I'm sure Terry would love to go. I know she's inter-

ested in the movie crowd, and I'm sure she'd add a lot."

She astounded them both with her suggestion.

"Terry? Your boss?" Willard seemed puzzled. "Why, I never thought of her! In fact, I never thought of going out with anyone on the staff. But you seemed harmless," he added jokingly.

Monica sighed with relief. "Well, at least you're not mad at me. Guess I'm really an ungrateful wretch."

"I'm not mad, why should I be?" He opened the door to his office, then looked back at her with a friendly wink. "Besides, you gave me an interesting idea." He closed the door behind him, and Monica walked into the Entertainment Department, thinking happily that it had been a pretty good afternoon on all scores.

On her second trip to the theater, Monica, feeling like one of the trade, went straight to the stage door and walked up the metal stairs to Danny Allen's dressing room. Jack Monroe was just leaving. He greeted her and said that Dan was in the shower and would be right out. Coffee for two was on the dressing table, and why didn't she just help herself? He would be back in a couple of minutes, he added. She thanked him, but decided to wait.

Sitting on a rickety wooden chair, she looked in

amazement around the dingy dressing room: shiny brown walls, paint cracking everywhere, an old upright piano with initials carved on it, and as the crowning irony, a large sign from the Fire Department, stating that the maximum number of people allowed in the room was 350. Had someone brought it in as a joke, she asked herself. The shower was still running full force. How long will this man stay in there, she puzzled, wondering if he knew she was there, and whether she should cough or strike a few notes on the keyboard. Finally he came out, clad in a maroon silk lounging robe. Yesterday's curly locks were nowhere in evidence; only a much-receded hairline where the toupee had been. He greeted her pleasantly, then went over to the dressing table and handed her a cup of coffee. She wondered when she could begin the interview.

"Well now, tell me," he started, turning his back on her and studying his own face in the mirror, "how come someone as young as you gets to be an editor?"

"Oh, I'm not an editor yet, just an assistant, Mr. Allen."

"Oh, I see. I would have thought they'd send the editor on an important story like this."

Monica felt he sounded disappointed, but he went on cheerfully enough,

"Let's cut out that 'Mr. Allen' business. I'm not that much older than you are."

"All right, Dan. Why don't you start telling me about yourself?" Monica felt she should be getting down to her assignment. "Your clarinetist told me that you come from a long line of musicians. When did you actually start getting formal piano lessons, besides those your parents gave you?"

Dan sat back in the chair, sipping his coffee, and gave her in great detail the background of his beginnings. He seemed to enjoy talking about himself, although Monica knew he must have discussed the same material dozens of times. He told her of his training at a fine conservatory, and of his parents' opposition when he turned to popular music. He spoke of the great days of band popularity, before World War II, and of the difficulties of holding an orchestra together, now that vocalists were all the rage.

Monica grew more and more interested as he continued, but gradually Dan's enthusiasm seemed to fade. For a while he answered questions without volunteering any extra information. Soon it was down to just yes or no. He got up, walked over to the piano and struck a couple of notes.

"Well, at least I'm glad we're getting a chance to be alone," he said, looking at her. "Monroe doesn't usually let me be distracted by pretty girls."

Embarrassed, Monica searched her mind for another question to ask him.

"Does it present any special problems, to lead a band while sitting at a piano?"

He looked annoyed. "You really have a one-track mind, don't you? Why don't you tell me something about yourself now? What do you do with yourself evenings?"

What do I do now, she asked herself. Enid never told me about characters like this. He thinks I will be flattered by his personal interest. Aloud, she tried again,

"How many children do you have, Dan?"

As soon as she had said it, she realized her mistake. What a question to ask, just when he was picturing himself as a romantic hero! And besides, she knew the answer anyway!

He gave her an icy look and demanded: "Haven't you read anything about me? The least you could know is that I have two children! I am always being photographed with them!"

She blushed—and realized that she was losing ground. What else did the bio mention that I could follow up on, she thought anxiously. She tried to phrase her questions carefully, but the words kept getting jumbled up. Oh, why didn't Mr. Monroe come back, as he had promised he would?

"I'm interested in what I read about the new sounds your band has been working on. How do you get the instruments to create sounds they were not orig-

inally meant to make? You don't use bowler hats like they did in the old jazz days, do you?" She hoped her attempt at humor would snap him out of his sullen mood.

"I have some of my wood winds coming in under the note and sliding up to it . . . you look like you don't understand a word of it. I don't know why your magazine doesn't send someone a little more familiar with music to interview a musician."

Her heart was pounding loudly, and her hands were damp. She felt a sense of panic—suddenly the whole interview was getting out of hand.

"Please go on explaining, I do understand. How did you hit on this idea? Was it accidental?"

"I really haven't any more time to waste on this. I have to get ready to go on again. But since your background seems to be so sketchy, I think you'd better let Jack take a look at the article before it gets into print. Not that I think you'll ever get it written! You haven't taken a single note since you've been here."

He walked over to his dressing table and started applying make-up to his face. Anger swept over Monica. He would never dare to ask Terry to submit her article for approval, she thought, humiliated. She sprang to her feet, blinking back the tears, and explained tremulously to the powdered face in the mirror:

"We never take notes. That's not how a word portrait is created! And I was *not* unprepared, that's not it at all. You're miffed because I didn't flatter you. You're just an old egotist!"

She whirled around, picked up her bag and headed for the door. There, looking completely startled, stood Jack Monroe, one hand on the doorknob. For a moment she stared at him, frozen to the spot. Then suddenly she ran past him, down the stairs and out into the street.

She found herself on the corner of Times Square, wondering what to do next. People were walking past, many disappearing into a large drug store behind her. She turned around, followed them in, stepped into a phone booth and dialed Larry's number.

When the switchboard operator at Larry's office answered, she dumbly wondered what she was doing, disturbing him at work. But a minute later he was on the phone, concern in his voice, and she was sobbing into the receiver and telling him of the failure of her very first assignment.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

FOR THE twentieth time, Monica read over her article. She put in a comma, took out a semicolon, corrected a typing mistake. She thought it read quite well and was really a sharp etching of the man. For the past three days, she had given her story every available minute, trying to incorporate all the impressions she had formed of the band and their contribution to today's popular music. What worried her most was that it was not a very flattering picture of Danny Allen. She couldn't help but convey her feelings as they were, so she had been completely unable to make him out a hero. Will the magazine expect me to picture him through rose-colored glasses, she asked herself anxiously.

After the interview, Monica had convinced herself that the magazine would hear about her scene with Danny Allen, and that everyone would know her conduct had been unbecoming for a feature writer. Larry, however, was most reassuring. It was highly unlikely, he thought, that anyone on the staff would find out what had gone on backstage at the theater, and as the days went by without repercussions, Monica forgot her initial fear and concentrated on turning out a good story.

Now, feeling that there were no more changes she could make, she reached for the paper on which to type her clean copy so she could rush it through and get a reaction from her editors. There's no school tonight, she thought, so I'll stay a little later and finish typing it.

She was half way through when Willard stuck his head in the door and, talking over her head, asked:

"Ready to go yet?"

Looking at Terry, Monica saw that, while she had been busy typing, her editor had been getting ready to go out. Her hair was combed, her hat was on, and she was typing very gingerly, careful not to chip an obviously new coat of nail polish. She smiled at Willard and said:

"All set. All I have to do is drop this manuscript off in Mrs. Duncan's office."

"I'll take it for you, Terry," Monica broke in. "I'll be around a little while longer."

Willard sat on Monica's desk, casually glancing at the typed copy at her side.

"Is this your bandleader piece, Monica? I'd like to see it when it's finished."

Monica nodded, smiling, and watched the two of them go out the door. She thought she saw Willard winking at her on his way out, but she wasn't really sure. So he did ask Terry to the cocktail party, after all, she told herself, and felt very much like patting herself on the back.

A few minutes later, she picked up the manuscript on Terry's desk and walked down the hall to Mrs. Duncan's office. The editor's secretary was on the phone, cradling the receiver on her shoulder while she attempted to pin her hat into place. Monica stopped for a second to look at an advance copy of next month's issue of the magazine. She straightened up when she heard Miss Graham say:

"I'm sorry, Mr. Monroe, Mrs. Duncan has left for the day."

Monica felt as if she'd been clobbered. She wanted to turn and leave as fast as she could but she was hypnotized by the secretary's words, afraid to hear more, yet having to hear it.

"Let me look at her calendar, Mr. Monroe. Why, no, she doesn't have a lunch date tomorrow. I'm sure

she'll be glad to see you. Yes, we'll call you in the morning to confirm it. You're welcome. Good-bye."

Miss Graham looked up and smiled at Monica. "Yes, what is it, dear? Can I help you?"

Monica stood there, manuscript in hand, not sure, herself, why she had come. Then suddenly she remembered.

"Oh, I just wanted to leave Terry's story. I'll put it right here."

As fast as she could, she ran back to her office.

She sank down in her chair, trying to reason with herself. Maybe it's some other Mr. Monroe. Or maybe it's Jack, but he did say that he'd been the Duncans' friend for many years; they must have lunch together quite often. Yet a frightening voice kept warning her that, whatever the reason for this lunch date, her scene with Danny Allen was bound to come up. And very likely that would be the end of her job.

After that, all the joy of having turned out a good article was gone, and it took every bit of her will power to concentrate on completing the final copy, which she wanted to leave on Terry's desk that night. It took much longer than she had expected. Her thoughts kept wandering and her fingers seemed to hit all the wrong keys, and several times she had to retype whole pages.

Falling asleep that night was another struggle to overcome. For a long time, she tossed restlessly.

By morning, Monica was terrified of going to work. She could hardly bear the tension within herself when she realized, later that day, that Teresa was reading her story, making occasional marks in the margin with her pencil. On top of everything else, Monica thought despairingly, the story can't be much good if she's making that many corrections. She tried not to watch Terry's expression as she read, afraid of any hint of disapproval in her face. Her glance went instead to Enid, the only one who knew about the blowup with the bandleader, and she couldn't wait to tell her about the conversation she had overheard in Mrs. Duncan's office.

But Terry was smiling when she came over to Monica a few moments later and returned the manuscript to her desk.

"Well, Monica, this reads quite well. I think you could clarify a few points I've marked before showing it to Mrs. Duncan, but on the whole I liked it. Dan Allen doesn't sound like very much of a man. Too bad you had to land him for your first interview. But never mind, we all come across one sooner or later."

Small comfort that is, Monica thought. We don't all fly off the handle and lose our job along the way.

She spent her lunch hour somewhat ruefully in-

corporating the changes Terry had made in the article. The ideas did help to tighten up the story, yet she could not help wishing that her first piece had not needed someone else's revision.

Monica interrupted her self-concentration long enough to wonder if Terry's happy mood had something to do with last night's date with Willard, but she was too concerned with her own problems to linger long over the thought.

Finally she was ready to assemble the corrected pages and hurry down the hall to Mrs. Duncan's door. The secretary was out and a quick look into the editor's office revealed that she, too, was not yet back from lunch. She pictured Liz Duncan and Jack Monroe devouring her, as well as their meal.

The afternoon was endless, and no word came from Mrs. Duncan's office. And that evening at school, when Monica's history quiz paper was returned with a big red "Excellent" penned across the bottom of the page, she felt no happier than she had at any time since she had heard about the fateful lunch date.

Even Larry, who usually saw the bright side of everything, looked worried when she told him of the conversation she had inadvertently overheard. They were having coffee together at their usual haunt, and he tried to cheer her up by suggesting that she accompany him to his sister's home the coming week end.

"I've told Julie a lot about you, and she's really

anxious to meet you. I'd like it so much if the two of you became friends!"

He looked at her intently, and for a moment their eyes held. Eagerly, she nodded her agreement.

"That sounds wonderful! I'll ask my parents when I get home tonight. I'm sure they won't mind, though. It seems to me that 'most anything you suggest is all right with them." She grinned at him impishly. "Anyway, I want to meet that kid brother of yours. I aim to look him over as a prospective boy friend for Mary!"

"Don't mention girls to Ned at this stage!" Larry looked positively horrified. "In his book they're nothing but a nuisance. But maybe if we give them a couple of years, who knows . . ."

She felt a warm glow to think that Larry envisioned their friendship as a lasting thing. The worry of the last few days faded momentarily into the background, and the prospect of the coming week end was uppermost in her mind when she unlocked the door to the Cole apartment.

A crack of light coming from her parents' room indicated that they were still awake. She knocked gently, and opened the door at her father's whispered "Come in."

Mrs. Cole's face was almost entirely hidden by the sheets, and Mr. Cole put a finger to his lips, warning Monica that her mother had fallen asleep. She tip-

toed to his bed and placed her history paper joyfully in his hand. Quickly he put his book on the night table and sat up straighter, a happy smile on his face.

"That's just splendid, Monica. You've really done well in everything this term, haven't you?" His face grew serious. "In a way, I guess it wasn't so bad, after all, your flunking a midterm. It made you more aware of what a big task you'd set for yourself and forced you to budget your time more successfully."

"Well then, Dad, do I get a reward?" she asked, pleased with herself for the first time in days. "Larry has asked me to come along to his sister's for the week end. We'd go up after class on Saturday. Would that be okay with you?"

She forgot to whisper, and her father shushed her again, then nodded his consent, smiling, to her request. She blew him a kiss and walked softly out of the room and toward her own door.

The first phone call at work the next morning was for Monica. Inevitably, it was Miss Graham, announcing that Mrs. Duncan wanted to see her. On her way out, Monica looked longingly at Enid's desk, wishing that her friend were there to pat her on the back and wish her Godspeed. But Enid hasn't come in yet, Monica thought, as she knocked on the editor's door, I'm on my own, for better or worse.

Katie Graham smiled as she said good morning,

and Monica decided, she can't possibly know, or she wouldn't look so welcoming.

"Go ahead in. She's waiting for you."

Miss Graham's voice gave no indication of what Monica could expect. She pushed open the door and walked in softly, more scared than she ever remembered being. Mrs. Duncan was busy at her desk, a large black straw hat hiding her face as she bent low over her work. When she looked up, her expression left no doubt as to the nature of their conversation.

"I won't waste much time on preambles, Monica," she said abruptly.

Monica looked around dumbly, wondering whether she should sit down, or face the firing squad on her feet. Then Mrs. Duncan pointed toward a chair and continued,

"I had lunch yesterday with Jack Monroe. I guess you know who he is. He said he had a talk with you when you went to interview Danny Allen. In fact, he said at first he thought you were handling it very well. But he also told me what happened later, and I can't tell you how shocked I was to hear it."

Monica sat stiffly, looking at her shoes, not daring to open her mouth but wondering if she would get a chance to tell her side of the story.

"I realize you're a very young girl," the editor continued, "and perhaps it was our fault, Teresa's and mine, for expecting a degree of maturity that an

eighteen-year-old couldn't possibly have. You must realize that when you go on an assignment, you go as an ambassador from the magazine, and the impression you create will reflect on *Living Today*. I can't imagine what was on your mind when you lost your temper in such a childish way, no matter what the cause. Jack Monroe said he only heard the end of the conversation, so perhaps you'd like to tell me what led up to your outburst—although nothing can ever completely justify such behavior."

Monica had relived the scene with the bandleader a thousand times since the day it had happened, but now that she was being asked to relate it, she somehow couldn't find the words. The harder she tried to find a beginning, the more tongue-tied she became. It seemed to her that Mrs. Duncan was staring her down, coldly watching how she was handling herself.

Finally she knew she would have to say something. As soon as she heard her own voice, the words came pouring out. She suddenly remembered everything that had happened, and she told it all, not trying to weight events in her favor, but drawing a complete picture.

When she finished, Elizabeth Duncan looked at her and nodded.

"I had heard that he was a difficult person, and I can see where he would try to swing his weight with someone young and relatively inexperienced. This

does not excuse your losing your temper, but it does explain things somewhat."

She opened a drawer and pulled out Monica's article.

"As a matter of fact," she went on, "your story gave a pretty good indication of Mr. Allen's character, but I was glad to see that in your writing you managed to remain comparatively objective."

Monica looked at her manuscript eagerly.

"Do you want me to make some changes in the way I've presented him? I'd be glad to try to make him sound more pleasant." She wanted desperately to appear helpful, and hoped that maybe there was still a chance to smooth things over.

Mrs. Duncan didn't seem to warm to her eagerness to make matters right.

"No, no! If that's the way he is, that's how we shall present him to our readers. Above all, we want to be honest in our reporting."

We shall present him, Monica thought. Does that mean she's going to publish it? She wanted dreadfully to ask, but was much too unsure of her footing. Almost in answer to her unspoken question, the Editor went on.

"It's a good piece of writing, Monica, especially considering it's your first. It shows promise."

She handed the manuscript across the desk, and Monica noticed that, again, the page was dotted with

corrections. Oh, no, not more rewriting, she thought, disappointed. But that was exactly what Mrs. Duncan was saying.

"You take this back to your desk and make the changes I've suggested, then Teresa and I will see what issue we can fit it into."

She looked at the young assistant earnestly. "There will be many more opportunities for you during the next few months, Monica. Remember that awkward situations are things you have to learn to handle in a mature way. We'll be watching you carefully to see how you make out."

With a heartfelt expression of her appreciation, Monica got to her feet quickly, glad that she was free to go. She wanted to sort out the many divergent feelings that were rushing through her. Relief was uppermost, and she wanted to run through the hall and shout to the whole staff that she hadn't been fired after all. Disappointment was another, at the sight of her carefully typed story all marred by corrections. Must be because it's my first story, she thought. I'll have to learn to take it in stride.

Teresa was out on an assignment when Monica got back to the office, and she thankfully pulled a chair up to Enid's desk and told her the details of what had gone before. The corrections were really minor ones, Enid pointed out, and wasn't it worth the extra

work to hear Mrs. Duncan say that she would publish the article?

"I'm always having to rewrite articles," Enid continued, "and Terry's pieces are frequently changed. In fact," she added smiling, "if you look carefully, you'll see that Terry's editing of your story got edited, too!"

Monica noticed large question marks next to some changes Teresa had penciled in— Then she nodded, anxious to get the next question off her chest.

"What do you suppose she meant by many more opportunities? Do you think it has anything to do with your job?"

She said it tentatively, almost afraid to voice this hope. But Enid looked thoughtful and said, quite seriously.

"Yes, I think that's what she does mean. She knows I'm leaving, and I really rather think that she plans to throw more responsibility your way, and, if you live up to it, you'll be promoted. You can be sure that when I'm ready to go, I'll put a good word in for you."

Monica jumped up, did a happy little jig, then threw her arms around her friend. Enid returned the hug and continued,

"Matter of fact, I think Terry might put in a good word for you, too. She seems to have mellowed quite a bit toward you lately. Why, she acts almost

human! Must be because you've been less distant toward her, too. Incidentally, does she know that it's you who pushed Willard her way?"

Monica's eyes widened in surprise.

"How do you know? I didn't tell anybody!"

Enid looked triumphant. "Ah ha, so you did do it! My suspicions were well founded. Good work, Mo."

Monica couldn't resist a delighted giggle. Everything today has turned out well, after all, she thought, sitting down at her desk. And just when things have been looking so bleak all around.

She patted her manuscript fondly, then laid it aside while she prepared to answer some urgent letters that Terry had dictated the day before. She opened her drawer, fumbling for a fresh piece of carbon paper, and her hand ran across a small, scratchy object. The little bride doll rolled out, even dingier than when Ann MacLeod had first presented her with it. She tried to wipe off the smudges of carbon that darkened the wedding dress. Then, finding a little box that had once held staples, she gently laid her in it. Can't have you too battered when the day comes for passing you on, my girl, she thought.

Monica lowered the window to let in the warm spring air and leaned back contentedly against the worn upholstery of the car.

"I just can't get over it, Larry. I was all set to take the train up to your sister's."

He smiled, looking totally pleased with himself. "Well, what with summer coming, and now that I have a girl . . ."

He reached for her hand and held it for a moment. "Actually," he continued, "one of the men at the plant was being transferred, and he offered me this heap at a very noble price."

Monica snorted indignantly. "Don't you call it a heap. I love it already!"

"All right then, limousine! Anyway, you two will have a better chance to get acquainted as soon as finals are over," Larry said happily. "Then you and I will both have more time for driving around week ends. We'll be able really to explore the countryside around New York!"

"Oh Larry, what a wonderful prospect!"

"I see lots of wonderful prospects ahead for us, Mo. I hope you see them too."

His voice was tender and loving, and for the moment Monica found herself too moved to answer. She nodded, and rested her head on his shoulder, then pulled abruptly away as the car rumbled to a stop at the tollhouse.

Larry held a dollar bill out of the window, then slipped his arm around Monica's shoulder.

A thin giant of a guard frowned as he returned the change.

"Okay, lovebirds," he growled, "here's your money. And no one-armed driving . . . I see you!"

"None at all? Why, we've only just begun!" answered Larry, winking at Monica.

The guard wagged his finger at them, a broad grin on his face. Larry stepped on the gas and Monica, turning to wave, heard the friendly giant call out "Good luck to you!"

ALBERTA EISEMAN

grew up in Venice, Italy, and came to the United States in 1941. A graduate of Cornell University, she held several jobs in the Italian language field in New York, then went to work for *Seventeen* magazine where, among other pleasurable tasks, she reviewed books for young people.

Over a luncheon table at Schrafft's one day, Mrs. Eiseman and co-staffer Ingrid Sladkus compared notes on their ambition to write a junior novel about the magazine world . . . and before long *Monica* was on its way to Dodd, Mead & Company. It won the *Seventeenth Summer Literary Competition*, conducted by *Compact, the Young People's Digest*, and Dodd, Mead.

At present, Mrs. Eiseman lives in Westport, Connecticut, with her husband, two daughters, aged six and three, a cat and three brand new kittens, who love to nap on her desk. She writes free lance articles and is a regular contributor to the young people's page of the *New York Times* Book Review.

INGRID SLADKUS

in her first published short story, described her coming to the United States from Czechoslovakia in 1939, on her eighth birthday. At eighteen, she started work as an editorial assistant on *Seventeen* magazine, and held a scholarship in creative writing at Columbia University School of General Studies, where she attended evening sessions. Later, she married, moved to California, and was Teen Editor of the San Francisco *Examiner* until her husband's work brought them back to New York.